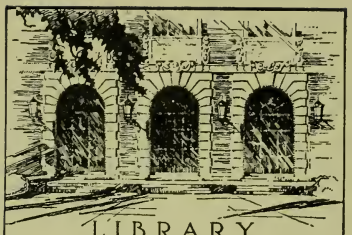
TWO LILIES

Julia Kavanagh



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TWO LILIES.

VOL. II.

TWO LILIES.

BY

JULIA KAVANAGH,

AUTHOR OF

"NATHALIE," "ADELE," "JOHN DORRIEN,"
&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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TWO LILIES.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN Edward Graham called the next day on Mr. Lennard, and informed him that he had found no traces of the old staircase, that gentleman merely puckered up his thick grey eyebrows, until his narrow, stubborn forehead became a net-work of wrinkles, and said, "Indeed!"

"No," quietly responded the young architect, looking unconcerned, but by no means so at heart, "I have found nothing."

"And perhaps there *is* nothing," argued Mr. Lennard, in a tone of remonstrance, and as if he were rather aggrieved than otherwise by Mr. Graham's unreasonable search for a staircase that had no existence. "If I were you,"

he added, in a low, confidential tone, laying his finger to his nose with a knowing look, "if I were you, Mr. Graham, I would let that staircase alone."

Mr. Graham, though taken by surprise, had the presence of mind not to betray it. He even looked thoughtful for a moment, then said gravely, "Well, Mr. Lennard, I think you are right. I shall take no more trouble about it." And so, with the assumption that he, and not Mr. Lennard, had originated it, the matter was dismissed. Some lurking uneasiness still remained in the young man's mind. Caprice always has a dangerous aspect; but the feeling gradually died away, and appeared to be fairly buried when Mr. Lennard gave a bachelor dinner, to which his friend's architect was invited. The dinner was a very pleasant one. It was excellent as a dinner. Mr. Lennard's old French *bonne* was a first-rate cook, and his wines were perfect. His guests, though few, were admirably matched. They had almost all dined with each other for many years, and knew their respective good and weak points to a T. They played into each other's hands without effort, knew what to say and what topics to shun; and

Mr. Graham was pleased to find that Mr. Lennard's worship for his nobly-descended friend was as fervent as ever. Indeed, Mr. Bertram was quite unaffectedly and easily the great man of the little feast. He uttered his studiously-polished phrases with the courteous attention to his own phraseology which may be expected from a high-bred gentleman of the old school. He looked calmly and amiably down on his fellow-guests, with those fine blue eyes of his, and received their homage with the serene condescension of a superior being. Edward Graham saw, indeed, that the excessive worship, to use a mild word, of Captain Jekyll, brought a fastidious meaning to Mr. Bertram's patrician face; but it passed away, and the Captain went on talking in a roar, and rolling his goggle eyes in fulsome admiration, until he brought matters to a crisis with old-fashioned courtesy. Mr. Lennard raised his glass, and drank the health of "The Bertram Lily" in choice Montebello. Mr. Bertram gracefully acknowledged the toast, and his white hand seemed whiter than ever, and the flash of his diamond ring quivered with something like emotion in its brilliancy, and all was going on

charmingly, when Captain Jekyll thought fit to exclaim—"Ay, ay, you don't get such lilies on the Smith and Jones bushes—eh, sir?" and he winked knowingly, and roared at his own wit. Mr. Lennard, though he belonged to the Smith and Jones tribe, as everybody knew, seemed to enjoy the joke; but Mr. Bertram, mindful, perhaps, of his daughter's share of plebeian blood, looked cold and displeased, and later muttered within Edward Graham's hearing, "That man is odiously indelicate, sir." Mr. Lennard, however, to whom the remark was addressed, only rubbed his hands in evident glee, and chuckled, and seemed infinitely amused. With this exception, the dinner went off charmingly.

"Nothing could be pleasanter," said Edward Graham to Lily Scot. "The two friends were quite cordial. It is all right."

But when is anything all right in this changing world? On the next day, as Mr. Graham stood looking at his turret—his far more than Mr. Bertram's—he suddenly knit his heavy Roman brows and bit his lip. Some very fine and elaborate stone carving was to adorn the windows of the turret. The task had been confided to a first-rate workman, and was now

so far advanced that Mr. Graham could judge what the effect of the whole might be. A look told him that the effect was null. Those clearly-cut thistle leaves, that vigorous northern foliage, which he had found flourishing on every roadside in the country, and which the old builders had transferred with such free and careless grace to the capitals of columns and the *façades* of houses in all Saint Aubin, which he had seized upon as being both beautiful and local, and tried to emulate with all the skill he called his—these ornaments, which were to distinguish his turret from any other plain turret, were a failure! That contrast of strong light and deep shadow, which he had wished for, had not been attained. The graceful foliage lay flat and lifeless on the stone wall.

"Charming!" murmured Mr. Bertram by his side. "That thistle is quite in character, Mr. Graham. The Greeks had their acanthus, but our northern thistle can compete with it. I am glad to see that you have noticed how it abounds in Saint Aubin sculpture."

But what is the ill-judged praise of the ignorant to the man conscious that his work is bad, and should be good? Moreover, the

workman, who also stood by his side, and who read the meaning of his clouded face and compressed lips, said doubtfully,

"It will look sharper when there is more of it."

Mr. Graham turned upon the man. He was a Parisian, slender and wiry, with a little black moustache and a keen, clever, slightly sarcastic face. He wore a Turkish cap with a tassel to it, a grey blouse of fine holland, immaculate wristbands and embroidered slippers. Mr. Graham did not like the man, but he could not do without him.

"You could not get another like him for twenty leagues around Saint Aubin," Monsieur Jean Merle had said. "He got into trouble in Paris, and that is why we have him here; and then, though he is insolent, he is honourable. He keeps to an agreement, Monsieur; and then he is a genius, is Laurent."

But geniuses are hard to please; and Monsieur Laurent's approbation of the young architect had always been very limited indeed.

"Ah! Gothic thistle," he had carelessly said; "I prefer Renaissance ornament—it is rounder and more harmonious. I like the cheerfulness

of it. Renaissance is happy and airy; Gothic is melancholy."

This comment, uttered in Mr. Bertram's hearing, greatly displeased Mr. Graham. He resolved to keep Monsieur Laurent at a distance, and was therefore more annoyed than pleased at his consolatory assurance that it would look sharper when there was more of it."

"It will look flatter," thought Edward Graham; "but is the blame his or mine?"

His brow flushed to think that the error might be his; and he bit his lip at the thought of being fettered with an incompetent instrument. Whichever was the case, he saw delay and pecuniary loss before him, not to speak of possible contention. "I must not tell Lily about this—it would distress her," was the only conclusion he came to as he left Mr. Bertram's house; and he would certainly have adhered to this resolve if he had not found himself alone with Lily Scot that evening. They met daily, but had little private intercourse. Lily had so much to do that she really could not spare many minutes for her lover. Mrs. Scot would not admit for a moment that she could be in the way; and whether they were

so or not, Jane and Louisa were firmly determined to see and hear as much as they could of what was going on. Mr. Graham had chafed at first, then he had submitted, wisely remembering that a time would come when he should have Lily all to himself. But on this evening Mrs. Scot was in her room with a headache, and Jane and Louisa had gone to see Miss Bertram's rabbits. Lily was in the garden, sauntering there in the cool Spring evening, and alone.

"What a relief!" Edward Graham could not help saying.

"What is a relief?" asked Lily, demurely; but he could see her smile in the twilight.

"You know," he answered, smiling too.

She softly passed her hand through a bush of sweet-brier, and walked on, smiling still, and looking, thought her lover, very white and fair in that cool light; but even the contemplation of her gentle, refined face could not chase care away. His smile vanished, and the anxious look came back to his eyes, the cloud to his brow.

"Mr. Graham, what ails you?" asked Lily.

He hesitated, then he told her, but he made light of it.

"It is nothing, you know," said he—"nothing at all, only everything went on so well, that trifle worries me."

"Yes, of course," said Lily; "and I am sure it is nothing, as you say," she sweetly added—more sweetly than sincerely, for a terrible thought had crossed her mind and filled it with dismay. What if the mistake were greater and lay deeper than Mr. Graham confessed?—what if the turret were all wrong?—and what, above all, if Mr. Graham were not a genius? To doubt the man they love in anything is impossible to some women. They pass from the natural worship of the child for its parents to the adoration of the girl for her lover. But Lily Scot was not such a woman. She had never worshipped her mother in any way, never thought her perfect and infallible amongst women. She accepted Mr. Graham's love, and gave him her maiden affections in a quiet, independent spirit. He was a very nice man, and would make a very nice husband, and she thought him exceedingly clever; but after all, when a check came, when on his own confession there was a mistake somewhere, she began to fear that she might have overrated his abilities.

What did she know about architecture? How could she say that he was an Inigo Jones or a Christopher Wren redivivus? In short, the blind, fond, unreasoning trust was not hers. That might be why, though she spoke so sweetly, her kind, soothing words gave Mr. Graham little comfort. His pride was secretly stung. He put on a brave, cheerful air, and said pointedly,

"You understand, my dearest Lily, that it is really nothing——"

"Oh, of course," she hastened to remark.

"But this is my first great venture," he continued, "and so I may feel too anxious."

"I am sure you do," she cheerfully replied, slipping her arm within his, and looking up in his face with wistful tenderness.

Then she spoke to him about Jane and Louisa, who were getting on so nicely; then of some of her own little trials; then she indulged herself with a few glimpses of the future, modest yet happy, and in these glimpses her lover saw new tokens of the serene domestic nature which was her prevailing charm. But though her gentle society suspended his trouble for a while, the annoyance returned all too swiftly and too surely when they parted.

He spent a sleepless night, and early the next morning he repaired to the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Only a servant or two were about. The day was grey and lowering, and the new turret rose white and cold on a background of dull and sullen clouds. All the young architect's fears were confirmed. The ornament looked deplorably flat, tame, and poor, and, culminating misfortune, the fault was his! He stood looking thus in silent mortification, when Monsieur Jean Merle appeared, cheerful and breathless, for he was in a great hurry, having to go home at once.

"I see we are going on finely," said he to Edward Graham, rubbing his hands as he spoke. "Madame Merle is the sort of woman who never loses any time, and she has given me a sixth boy, you must know. I must go and have a look at the good lady. She is doing very well, and so is the turret—eh, Monsieur Graham? It will be a grand thing. They tell me the baby is twice the size of the last. How well that thistle looks—eh, Monsieur Laurent?"

Monsieur Laurent had just sauntered in. On being thus appealed to, he said, without enthu-

siasm, that the thistle looked well, but prudently added that it would look better on a sunny day.

"Of course it will!" cried Monsieur Merle, still happy and exuberant. "Good morning, Monsieur Graham—good morning, Monsieur Laurent."

The workmen now came in, whistling cheerfully. They set to their tasks, laughing and shouting. How Mr. Graham envied their careless mood! "I wonder, after all, who is the happier man," thought he, watching one careless fellow who stood whistling on a frail plank, reckless of the gap at his feet—"he who trusts to his brain and men's esteem for the reward of his toil, or he who relies on the strength and skill of his right hand, and whose sure eye and steady foot alone save him from a frightful death? Who can solve the vexed question?"

Here these philosophic speculations came to an abrupt end, for Mr. Cowper suddenly entered the court and stood before Edward Graham, fair, courteous, and smiling. Mr. Cowper had vanished so suddenly from Saint Aubin on the news of Edward Graham's and Lily Scot's engagement, that it was impossible for Miss Scot's

favoured lover not to conclude that the man whom he disliked had secretly been his rival. Involuntarily he had triumphed in his absence, and his unexpected return now stung him as a sort of insult. What ill wind had brought him? Nothing, however, could be more conciliatory than Mr. Cowper's address.

"My dear Graham," said he, with open look and extended hand, "how are you?—deep in the turret? On my word it is a fine thing. I congratulate you, I do; though, by-the-by, are those large leaves—thistles, I suppose—are they quite the thing?"

"They will be, I hope," sharply answered Mr. Graham.

"Of course—of course," soothingly said Mr. Cowper. "I suppose I shall find Mr. Bertram within?" And with a graceful wave of his gloved hand he entered the house.

"Even he can see it," thought Edward Graham, as he walked home to the Cité de Jérusalem. "A child can see it; only where is the remedy?" He sat long in his room, brooding over this mishap, and vexing himself till he could bear no more. He then took his hat and walked out. He was resolved to try if air and

fatigue would not make him look at things more calmly. And if they could carry off his annoyance so that no trace of it should be left for Lily's soft dark eyes in the evening, why, so much the better.

He took the direction of Saint Aubin sur dun, and was soon out in the open country, beyond even the village and its pleasant homesteads. A low, sullen sky bent over the plain; a road wound through this till it vanished like a thread in the misty horizon. There had been heavy rains for the last week, and the earth looked sodden. Here and there a broad pool gave back the pale clouds, which hung over them as if no breath of wind could ever make them move on. The day was a sad day, with nothing pleasant or hopeful in its mien, and so Edward Graham felt it; yet the walk had done him good—his blood flowed freely in his veins, and he began to think that his difficulty, or his mistake, whichever it might be, was no great thing after all, when a raven flew past.

Do you believe in omens, reader? Have you too got, not your presentiment, that sort of whisper which everyone seems destined to hear at some time or other, but that sign from the

outward world which tells so plainly to some amongst us, and to some only, that trouble or sorrow is at hand? Edward Graham had his, an omen which once before in his life had spoken, an omen which he could not forget, for it was linked with his last recollection of a mother whom he had dearly loved.

They were out in the country on a grey day like this, he a lad walking by her side, when they came to an open quarry. A band of ravens was slowly wheeling above this. Some were going up, others were going down, all were croaking. Mrs. Graham gave her son a frightened look.

"Oh!" she said shrinkingly, "ravens mean a long parting, Ned."

"And I am only going away for a few days," he answered gaily.

He left the next morning for a few days, as he had said, but when he came back his mother was no more. He never forgot those words of hers—"a long parting;" nor that dull landscape, nor that leaden sky, nor the wheeling ravens going up and down the quarry; and when, long after this, in the course of his reading, he came upon an Arab poem, in which the

raven is anathemized as the forerunner of sorrow and separation, he remembered it all more vividly still; and the latent superstition of his Italian blood, the heathen abhorrence of and belief in the fatal influence of that dark bird of prey on human destinies, awoke in him to sleep no more. Many a time he had turned back to avoid his enemy, and though he was too wise, too reticent to boast of this strange superstition, he was too much in earnest to feel ashamed of it, even to himself. He accepted it with a sort of Pagan fatalism. He neither doubted it nor speculated about it. It was so. The raven was a token of trouble to him—how or why he could not tell, but the raven was to be avoided by all means. But now, as the raven flew past in the grey sky, it was too late to shun him, and Edward Graham being no coward, thought rather defiantly, "Well, let the trouble come. I suppose I can bear it." And he stood and looked curiously at that black speck, following its steady flight with a sort of resentment, until it vanished. Then, and not till then, he turned back.

The wind had risen. It soon became strong and gusty, and swept over the desolate-looking

land with a moan both loud and shrill. With this mingled the dull roaring of the sea; the mighty voice seemed to call him. The young man looked for a path that should lead him to the beach, and soon found one. It sank down between high banks, and led him on, the deep murmur growing londer and louder, till it brought him to what he was seeking. Perhaps the raven which had flown by, perhaps the events which were to follow, impressed it on his memory, but, whatever the cause might be, the picture which Edward Graham then saw he never forgot.

On either side of the rude and hollow path grew gigantic oaks. Their roots clung to barren rocks, their heads were reared in a stormy sky. Beneath the broad arch of their wide boughs the young man saw a misty horizon and a grey sea rushing sullenly up to the shore. It was as wild a landscape as he had ever beheld; and to give it a more desolate meaning, an old woman sat on a low bank of earth, with a little fagot of sticks, which she had been gathering, by her side. Her hands were clasped around her knees, and her pale, wearied face looked out at him from beneath

her black hood as she gazed moodily before her, a living image of that disappointment which waits for man at every turning of his fate. Edward Graham gave her a keen, searching look, then saying to himself, "She is only a tired woman," he walked on to the beach.

The tide was coming in, and the sea was a fine one. The waves leaped up in their reckless mirth, which is so grand and terrible to see. No one save Edward Graham was there to look on their wild play. They rolled over one another, they strove who should first reach the beach, they broke there in a long line of foam, and then with a hollow sound, they ran back to the great sea, swift, silent, and stealthy, to begin anew, and encroach more and more on the wet shingle, never reaching the foot of the low cliffs, and yet as eager in their race as though they meant to flow over them and flood the land. There are no aspects of Nature so absorbing as those of the sea. The clouds and mists which gather around, the changing lights which pass athwart the mountains have not the same endless variety as we find in the dim horizon, the cloudy or serene skies, the smooth or sullen waves of the ocean.

Edward Graham had been reared by the sea-side, and the fascination upon him of that moving plain, of those heavy masses of water, of that incessant voice which night and day raises its loud murmur to Heaven, never wearied, though seemingly never heard, was deep and entire. He forgot his annoyance, he forgot even the raven as he walked along by those breaking waves, holding with them that secret converse which never ceases in the human heart, that silent speech with Nature which sleeps in cities and wakens again the moment we see her face. The wildness of the shore gradually faded, the cliffs grew lower and more broken, and fine lines of shipping began to appear, and flags to flutter on the cloudy sky; whilst a broken outline of roofs showed that Saint Aubin was nigh. By this the tide had turned, and a long wet line remained where the waves had been. Their fury, too, had abated, and they now tumbled languidly over one another as they rolled back to their vast bed. Edward Graham was watching one curiously, and he stood still to mark its retreating course, when he became aware of two ladies walking towards him, and to his great surprise he recognised

Miss Scot and Miss Bertram. Miss Bertram's quick brown eyes saw him first.

"Oh! Lily, there's Mr. Graham," she cried aloud, clasping her hands with that earnestness which she put into all she did when her mood happened to be a grave one.

Miss Scot's eyes were bent on the earth. She raised them, and the moment Mr. Graham met their look and saw the sad gravity of her sweet young face, he felt that something had happened, and that the raven had not flown over his head in vain.

"My dear Lily," he said, going up to her, "what brings you here?—and what—what is it?"

He took her hand and looked down in her face with fond concern, regardless, and indeed forgetful of Miss Bertram's presence. Miss Scot did not answer at once, and Miss Bertram exclaimed eagerly,

"Oh! Mr. Graham, it is so dreadful!"

But though she raised herself on tip-toe to say so, Mr. Graham did not even heed her, so anxious was he to read Lily Scot's troubled face.

"Mr.Graham," she said at length, "I am afraid

it is all over. Poor mamma is ruined! We have lost all, or nearly all, we had. Mamma does not know it yet. Mr. Cowper came last night and brought the news to Mr. Bertram, who has just been telling me, and I was so overcome that I came here with Lily—I cannot face mamma yet. Mr. Bertram is looking everywhere for Mrs. Petherick, who knows all about it, to caution her not to say a word to poor mamma, who has a weak heart, till he has broken the sad news, for she must be told all the same; and we are undone." She tried to speak steadily—in vain; her voice faltered as she uttered the dismal tidings.

Edward Graham heard her in mute consternation, then, with that incredulity which is the protest of indignant human nature against sorrow—so hard, so cruel does it seem—he poured forth useless questions. How was this? Was there no mistake? There must be a mistake somewhere. It could not be true. But it was true, and there was no mistake. The great City bank of Marshall and Sylvester had stopped payment, and was not expected to give sixpence in the pound. Mr. Bertram had lost two thousand pounds, and Mrs. Scot nearly all she had in the world.

"My poor darling," tenderly said Edward Graham, taking her two hands and clasping them in his, "this is indeed a blow; but we are young, and it shall not part us, and Mr. Cowper need not have brought the news," he added, with a flash in his dark eye.

"Mr. Graham, it must part us," sadly replied Lily. "You are not rich, and—and there are four of us," she added, with a heavy sigh.

The prospect of marrying Mrs. Scot, and Louisa, and Jane, as well as the gentle and charming girl before him, was appalling enough in all reason; but Mr. Graham knit his heavy brows, and compressed his lips, and clasped the two little hands of his betrothed all the more closely as he said,

"Nothing shall part us, Lily—nothing."

They both forgot Miss Bertram, who hastened to put in her word.

"And you know, Lily, that Jane and Louisa are to come to us—you know they are," she added ardently. "Papa said so at once, and they must come," added Miss Bertram, her bright eyes dewy with tears.

"Dearest Lily," said Mr. Graham, making her walk on, and walking by her side, "trust in me—trust in me."

"I shall give them my room," said Miss Bertram triumphantly, following the lovers as she spoke, "and they shall have their bit of garden just as I have. I asked papa, and he said yes; and we shall dress alike, and be sisters—real sisters, you know, because——"

Here Miss Bertram paused. Engrossed by her own thoughts though she was, she suddenly became aware that Mr. Graham and Miss Scot were not attending to her. They were walking on, his face bending to hers, her face raised to his, wrapped in each other as well as in their great trouble; and Miss Bertram—poor little Lily Bertram—with her eager good-will, was no more heeded than the shingle beneath their feet. She stood still and looked after them with mortification written on her expressive face. It is so hard to be put by, especially when one's heart overflows with zeal and affection, and the strong desire to serve. But though Miss Bertram was mortified, she was not angry. She loved these two very truly—far too truly to let the ungentle passion of wrath waken in her breast against them. She only gazed after them with something like reproach in her wistful eyes, and sat down on

the shingle, wondering, not that they cared so little about her, after all—she was too simple to come to that conclusion—but that they thought so little of her offer about Jane and Louisa. That the two girls should be so well and so tenderly provided for seemed to her so much, whereas Mr. Graham and Miss Scot really appeared to think nothing of it. She renewed the subject when they came back to her, but even then she found, to her vexation and surprise, that the fate of Jane and Lousia was not uppermost with either.

"Dear little thing!" kindly said Lily Scot, with a sweet sad smile; then she turned back to Mr. Graham, who never so much as seemed to hear that Jane and Louisa had been mentioned, and walking on to Saint Aubin with unheeded Miss Bertram walking by their side, they at length made her realise that she did not belong to them, nor they to her. They discussed their great calamity; they looked at it under every aspect, and they forgot the eager, wistful face, the tender and sympathizing eyes, and the patient feet of the little kind-hearted maid who was so ready to share her all with Jane and Louisa Scot.

CHAPTER II.

TROUBLE is like a wave of that rolling sea by which Mr. Graham had walked on the day when he learned the ruin of Mrs. Scot. It bursts upon the shore of life with foam and fury, seeming to bring destruction in its bosom; and after spending its wrath and doing its mischief, it falls back and leaves that shore beaten, broken, and disturbed; yet, to a careless eye, looking much the same as ever. So at the end of a week matters did not appear to be very different from what they had been before Marshall & Sylvester stopped payment. They gave more than sixpence in the pound—they gave "seven shillings and threepence," said accurate Miss Bertram. Mrs. Scot did not lose much more than half her income; and Mr. Bertram modestly acknowledged that his loss did not

exceed six or seven hundred pounds, "which," as Lily Bertram said again, "made a difference." Louisa and Jane stayed at home, and did not go and share all the good things Lily had intended for them; but Mr. Bertram, still willing to assist his friend and neighbour, hit on the ingenious plan of making Miss Scot Lily's daily governess. She relinquished her housekeeping duties, and gave them up entirely to Sarah. Mrs. Scot's comforts, too, had to go to the wall—a fact on which that lady dwelt far more bitterly than on her pecuniary losses, for, as she said, with perfect candour, she had never cared about money, which was, unfortunately, very true. So outwardly little or nothing was altered. Some pinching had to be practised—Jane and Louisa had to work without their sister's constant help to spur them on; and all Lily's leisure was gone; but, as Mrs. Petherick said, "One can see no great change, you know; and Mrs. Scot eats her cold chicken for luncheon all the same."

A difference there was, however, spite the chicken. That cruel wave had not beaten the shore in vain. Even Edward Graham knew now that he could not marry when the turret

was completed. For a year, for two, for three, perhaps, Mr. Graham and Lily Scot must be content to wait. Until he was a richer man, until Jane and Louisa would either marry, or be able to earn their own living, Mr. Graham could not withdraw Lily from her family. Lily acquiesced, but did not think that years would make the difference her lover hoped for. She knew that Jane and Louisa were neither clever nor industrious, and that husbands were more scarce than good-looking girls in Saint Aubin, so she was not hopeful. Mr. Graham, however, would be sanguine, and he gave himself up to his turret with renewed ardour. The mistake which had so disturbed him had proved to be a trifle. It was easily mended, and turned out to be a useful warning, which he took to heart.

That lull which comes after the storm had lasted two weeks, when Miss Bertram, whom he scarcely saw now that she was under Lily Scot's tuition, broke in one afternoon upon Mr. Graham, as he stood in the court, with eager impetuosity in her brown eyes and in her ringing voice.

"Oh! Mr. Graham, what do you think?" she asked.

"I think you a real little nuisance," mentally soliloquized Mr. Graham; but aloud he turned to Miss Bertram with a smiling countenance, and said quietly, "I am not prepared to confess my thoughts on such short notice, Miss Lily, excepting this one, however—I thought this was school-time."

"Oh! dear Miss Scot has such a headache," answered Miss Bertram dolefully, and shaking her brown head, on which the hot noonday sun was pouring his burning rays, "so she went and lay down; and I came to tell you, not that Miss Scot had a headache, so you need not laugh, Mr. Graham, but that Miss Cowper is coming to look at it."

"My dear Miss Bertram, you speak in riddles. Who is Miss Cowper, and what is *it?*"

Edward Graham spoke rather sharply. The mere name of Cowper had brought a flush of displeasure to his brow.

Miss Bertram parted her hair, shook it back, and looked at him in amazement. Was it possible?—did he not know—had he never heard of Miss Cowper, the great Miss Cowper, Mr. Cowper's rich aunt, and Mr. Lennard's sister-in-law? Why, all Saint Aubin knew

Miss Cowper, and she had arrived this morning, and she was coming to look at the turret this very afternoon. Mr. Graham, who had recovered his composure by this, seemed to hear the news with profound indifference.

"And don't you really know anything about Miss Cowper, Mr. Graham?" pursued Miss Bertram, still amazed. "Why, she is so rich, and she wanted to buy the brown house, and take it away with her, only the council would not sell it to her; and she is going to build almshouses in England; and when she heard about the turret, she said she should not wonder if you were not the very man she wanted. They are to be for old women, who are to wear dimity, says Miss Cowper, and such quaint mediæval caps. Miss Cowper is *so* pious!" added Miss Bertram under her breath, and with a certain look of awe. "She found me reading Walter Scott last year, and she was *so* angry!"

"How old is Miss Cowper?" asked Mr. Graham, getting a little interested.

"Oh, ever so old," honestly answered Miss Bertram—"forty at least—too old to be a Sister, I suppose; but she dresses almost like one, all in black and white. I suppose she is very

good," meditatively added Lily, as if black and white were somehow or other associated with goodness.

"I suppose so," answered Mr. Graham, smiling.

"Lily, what *are* you doing here?" remarked Mr. Bertram, who now came down the steps, and looked somewhat austerely at his daughter.

Miss Bertram answered that Lily Scot had a headache.

"Which is no sufficient reason for your hair being so very untidy," was the paternal rejoinder.

Lily Bertram hung her head abashed, shook her locks with some penitence, and stole away.

"I suppose Miss Bertram has been telling you that we may expect the visit of Miss Cowper presently?" remarked Mr. Bertram, whose real grievance with his daughter was caused, not by the untidiness of her hair, to which he was accustomed, but by her having anticipated him in the delivery of this piece of news. "A very remarkable person is Miss Cowper. I shall be happy if this little turret of Miss Bertram's is the means of recommending you to her attention."

Edward Graham bowed stiffly. The expression of "this little turret of Miss Bertram's," grated on his ear; moreover, Miss Cowper's name was displeasing to him, and even the chance of building her almshouses lost some of its attractiveness when he remembered that she was Mr. Cowper's aunt.

"Your friend, Mr. Cowper, is her favourite nephew," continued Mr. Bertram, "but unfortunately her large property is not at her own disposal. If she had married, indeed, it would have descended to her children, but she has remained single, and the inheritor of all her wealth is a distant cousin—a Mr. Cowper, whom she has never seen, and cannot endure—a sort of cotton man," continued Mr. Bertram, fastidiously flashing his diamond ring. "Very absurd, though to be sure we must remember that it was another cotton man who left her all this wealth two years ago, and so I suppose he wished it to go to cotton."

"A cotton lady!" ironically thought Edward Graham, whom these preliminaries by no means attracted towards the expected visitor.

When he came later in the day, he found her in the court. Mr. Lennard stood by her side;

Mr. Cowper lounged gracefully about, looking airy, lazy, and *débonnaire;* and Mrs. Petherick, all eagerness, ardour, and devotion, had evidently joined the rich lady with the intention of clinging to her.

"Ah! Mr. Graham, we have been wanting you so much," she cried gaily; "now do come and explain it all, if you please." And without waiting for his reply, she turned to Miss Cowper, and said confidentially, "I really ought to know everything about this house, for I can never help looking in at it—it is such a gem; but Mr. Graham will tell you better."

An audacious statement, if ever there was one, for Mr. Bertram had kept Mrs. Petherick at arm's length all this time, and she had come with Miss Cowper uninvited, in the desperate hope of forcing an entrance at last.

"Yes, do tell us all about it, my good fellow," said Mr. Cowper, still lounging about; "we are dying to hear you."

Mr. Graham looked coldly at the speaker, then turned to Miss Cowper and bowed gravely. Miss Cowper was a small, slight, fair woman, with light eyes and unmeaning features. There was nothing in her appearance to interest and

attract—perhaps the only remarkable point about her was her dress—black and white, as Lily Bertram had said, and so rigid in its outlines, so coarse in its texture, so uncompromising in its austere simplicity, that Mr. Graham shrewdly concluded the wearer thereby sought to make up for the insignificance of her person.

"My dear Miss Cowper, this is Mr. Graham, the architect, and this is the turret," said Mr. Lennard, with a good deal of impertinence.

Miss Cowper bowed very slightly to Edward Graham, and looked hard at the turret.

"Very fine," she murmured, "very fine. Earnest as all mediæval work, or as all work derived from mediæval design must be."

"This is as much Renaissance as mediæval," bluntly said Mr. Lennard. "A mixture of the two styles."

"Then it is vile!" emphatically retorted Miss Cowper—"all mixtures are vile," she added, after a pause, given to meditation.

"To be sure they are," airily remarked Mrs. Petherick.

"You prefer early Gothic," suggested Edward Graham.

"I do, Mr. Graham. My almshouses shall be

pure Gothic. I should like when you are at leisure to have a little earnest conversation on the subject of these almshouses. I have no doubt that you could give me many valuable suggestions, Mr. Graham."

Mr. Graham bowed, and was wholly at Miss Cowper's service; and Mrs. Petherick, nodding at him, but addressing Miss Cowper, said in her cheerful way,

"Mr. Graham is ours, Miss Cowper, but we will lend him to you. We are very proud of Mr. Graham in Saint Aubin, Miss Cowper."

"If my nephew," said Miss Cowper, ignoring Mrs. Petherick, and directing a severe look at the sinner who was just then kicking a pebble with the toe of his boot—"if my nephew had persevered in architecture, I need not now apply to you, Mr. Graham."

"My dear aunt," said Dick Cowper, gracefully, "what a blessing then that I did not persevere, for Graham is really what I should never have been—your man."

"An architect wanted me to have Tudor or Elizabethan almshouses," pursued Miss Cowper; "but, as I told him, those styles are vile, and——"

"Vile!—nonsense, Louisa!" interrupted Mr. Lennard; "there is nothing finer that Elizabethan."

"The spirit of it is vile because the age was vile," persisted Miss Cowper, whose pale cheek grew slightly flushed as she uttered this denunciation. "The Middle Ages were earnest, and their spirit was earnest."

"To be sure," chimed in Mrs. Petherick; "and that is why it is such a treat to look at this house."

"So I say, Mrs. Petherick," answered a loud voice from above—"a treat to look at this house—ha! ha!"

Mrs. Petherick looked up and saw Captain Jekyll's red face and goggle eyes beaming down upon her from a first-floor window. She stared at him in silent consternation. The Captain had got into Mr. Bertram's, he had invaded that last stronghold of Saint Aubin society, he had conquered, he was within, and she, Mrs. Petherick, was without. It was Mr. Lennard's doing, of course; but no matter through whom the deed was done, Mrs. Petherick felt defeated. The Captain meanwhile enjoyed his victory, and waved his hand at his fair enemy, and even

kissed his fingers to her before he drew in his head and joined Mr. Bertram, who, with unwilling courtesy was doing the honours of his house to his unwelcome visitor.

"The spirit is everything," continued Miss Cowper, looking hard at Mr. Graham, as if to make sure that he understood her.

"To be sure it is," cried Mrs. Petherick, rallying; then, her spirit being seized with a brilliant idea—no less than to go and tell all Saint Aubin how the Captain had got in to Mr. Bertram's ("all that horrid Mr. Lennard's doing, you know!") she took a hurried leave of Miss Cowper, who gave her a broad stare and resumed her lecture.

"It was only the other day that I said to my friend and neighbour, Mrs. Fay—you have heard of Mrs. Fay, Mr. Graham? The spirit Mrs. Fay—"

"And oh! Miss Cowper, how do you like it, and is it not beautiful?—and it is my turret, you know." So broke in Lily Bertram, who now came skipping down the steps, with her shining gold and brown hair neatly tied up behind her small, well-shaped head, and her rosy face shining with the recent application of soap and water.

"My dear, it is fine," answered Miss Cowper, without the least appearance of embarrassment at the apparent contradiction the word implied to her recent declaration that all mixtures were vile—"fine and earnest," she musingly added.

"And won't you get Mr. Graham to build your almshouses?" eagerly cried Lily, whose eyes sparkled at the thought. "He would build you such beautiful almshouses, Miss Cowper."

"You are a dear child!" replied the lady, patting her cheek, and it seemed to Mr. Graham that the words were spoken with a greater look of truth than her language had yet displayed—"a very dear child; and when I build and endow my almshouses, you shall be head Sister."

Lily clapped her hands and laughed, but Mr. Bertram, who had joined the group, with Captain Jekyll, of course, drew himself up, and seemed to think this no joking matter. Before he could utter a word, the Captain had burst in with a vehement and indignant, "Miss Bertram—the Bertram Lily a Sister!—fie, fie!"

"Miss Bertram's birth and position——" began Mr. Bertram.

"Princesses and queens," interrupted Miss Cowper, a little austerely.

"And I say it is all bosh!" put in Mr. Lennard, striking the pavement of the court with his cane. "Don't tell *me* about princesses and queens, Louisa. All those mediæval people were Little Johns and Robin Hoods."

"Little Johns and Robin Hoods!" repeated Miss Cowper, with a stare—"what do you mean, William? Do be earnest!"

"And so I am. I tell you all those people used the longbow. That's what I mean."

His tone was aggressive and sour. Mr. Bertram looked fastidious, and smiled at a butterfly which went bobbing past. Captain Jekyll shook his head in a fashion that meant anything any way; Mr. Cowper walked out of hearing; Miss Bertram looked a little dismayed, and Miss Cowper ineffably disgusted.

"Good morning, Mr. Bertram—so glad to have seen your beautiful turret!" she said. "Good morning, Mr. Graham. I admire the result of your labours prodigiously. I shall be so glad to have a little earnest conversation with you."

She walked away, followed by her nephew

and brother-in-law, and by Captain Jekyll, who was "charmed, ha! ha!" and accompanied to the gate by courteous Mr. Bertram. Lily, however, remained behind, and raising herself on tiptoe, half whispered in Mr. Graham's ear:

"How cross *he* is! It's all that horrid hedge, you know."

Mr. Graham did not answer, yet he, too, was struck with Mr. Lennard's manner. His old uneasiness came back, and he again mentioned it to Lily Scot. He went to see her that evening in her mother's house, and found her sitting up with Jane and Louisa, patiently hearing them through their lessons, and though looking pale, professing herself "quite well."

"So absurd of her, you know," murmured Mrs. Scot from her sofa. "Anyone can see, Mr. Graham, that she is quite ill, and ought to be in her bed."

"She certainly ought not to be listening to Jane and Louisa," a little indignantly replied Mr. Graham. "My dear Lily, do let me put these books away."

He stretched out his hand towards the offending volumes, but though Lily Scot allowed him to push them to one side, her whole aspect

plainly said that she yielded for the time only.

"I must say I think it hard that *my* daughter should have to be a slave to that little flighty daughter of Mr. Bertram," said Mrs. Scot, in an injured tone. "It quite tells upon her health, I assure you, Mr. Graham."

"Oh! mamma," remonstrated Lily.

"Nonsense, child—I tell you it interferes dreadfully. Mr. Lennard was quite put out at your not being able to help him with Miss Cowper. You will be delighted with Miss Cowper, Mr. Graham. She is a very remarkable person—such a fine character, and immensely rich!"

Mr. Graham answered that he had seen Miss Cowper, but expressed no delight; but this Mrs. Scot did not even notice. She was too eager to hear everything about the great lady. What did she say?—how did she look?—did she still wear black serge?—and other questions of the kind, which Mr. Graham answered rather briefly. Purposely, however, he mentioned the almshouses, and the conversation he was to hold on that interesting subject with Miss Cowper.

"Then your fortune is made, Edward!" exclaimed Mrs. Scot, sitting up in her excitement.

"I was afraid the almshouses were already built, but I am so glad Miss Cowper has not been able to find an architect to her liking, for, of course, now she will take you."

"Excuse me, Mrs. Scot, but nothing is less certain."

"Mr. Graham, you must excuse *me*. Miss Cowper dotes on my daughter Lily, and she will do it for Lily's sake, I am sure."

This was said with an affronted dignity which allowed of no reply. Mr. Graham smiled, but Lily sighed, and Jane and Louisa giggled and nudged each other. Miss Cowper was a standing joke with them.

"Mr. Lennard was with Miss Cowper," resumed Edward Graham, looking at Lily. "I thought his manner harsh and dry. Is there anything new?"

"Nothing new," she answered, hesitatingly; "but Mr. Bertram and he cannot agree about that hedge—it is a pity!"

"Mr. Lennard is a very pig-headed man," said Mrs. Scot, who was unusually wakeful and excitable. "He is all in the wrong. It stands to reason that a gentleman of Mr. Bertram's birth and pretensions would never be so per-

tinacious about a hedge if he were not in the right."

Mr. Graham looked at Lily, but her eyes were downcast, and she was playing idly with her watch-guard. He dropped the subject until he was taking his leave, and as Lily saw him to the gate, he then resumed it.

"How will it end, Lily?" he asked.

"Not well," she answered, with a heavy sigh.

"You mean for us?"

"Yes," she replied, in a low tone. "Good night," and she closed the gate and left him in the long moonlit street with that last foreboding word to bear him company to the City of Jerusalem. "And yet," thought he, as he walked home, "how can it end badly for me? What have I to do with Mr. Bertram's and Mr. Lennard's disagreements? Is not my business quite distinct from theirs? Dear Lily! it is all her tender affection that makes her so anxious."

CHAPTER III.

THE long-impending storm broke the very next morning. The sun had just leaped up into the chill blue sky, and not one of the workmen had yet come, when Mr. Graham went to Mr. Bertram's house, and standing in the court, looked at the turret in the swift-growing light of the Spring morning. He had not been there five minutes, when Lily Bertram made her appearance.

"Good morning, Mr. Graham," said she, and she sighed.

"Good morning, Miss Bertram," answered he, as shortly as good manners allowed.

"It is a beautiful morning," said Lily, looking miserable; "but then, where's the use of it, when one wishes that one were dead?" And Miss Bertram, having uttered this tragic sentiment, looked ready to cry.

Mr. Graham was surprised. Lily was bright as sunshine, and to see her depressed and with impending tears, seemed as unnatural as if rain had begun to fall with the May sun shining in the sky.

"Why, what has happened?" inquired the young man.

"Oh, the most dreadful things!" exclaimed Miss Bertram, clasping her hands, and looking more tragic than ever. "And oh! Mr. Graham, if you could do any good!"

"What is it, and what can I do?" he asked, uneasily.

"Papa and Mr. Lennard have quarrelled," she answered, and she burst into tears.

Mr. Graham expected this, yet he felt like one who has got a blow, but is at first too much stunned to know how or by what he is injured.

"Quarrelled?" he repeated vaguely.

"Yes," sobbed Lily, "they have quarrelled, oh! so dreadfully, all about that horrid hedge. Mr. Lennard wants to cut it down and build a wall ever so high, and that would ruin the view, and papa will not allow it, and the hedge is mine, and they quarrelled last night, and papa is gone this morning to get the best law-

yer in Dieppe, and if they come to law, it can never be made up, you know," said Lily, looking gloomy.

It is a law of our nature that we cannot hear of anything which may affect us without considering especially its bearings on our own concerns. The long friendship thus broken, the worship given and received ending thus, were not foremost in Mr. Graham's thoughts as he heard Lily, but he did think of the task he had undertaken, and of how it might fare with him if the two men on whom he relied were at issue. He knit his brows and bit his lip.

"My dear Miss Lily," said he, "you who are Mr. Lennard's ward and god-daughter, I believe, can interfere——"

"Oh, no!" interrupted Lily, wofully—"papa has forbidden me to do so."

"Then I cannot," said Mr. Graham—"I cannot take the liberty."

And he turned away as he spoke to address Monsieur Merle, who just then came in. Lily stole away with downcast eyes and depressed looks, and as soon as she was out of hearing, Monsieur Merle, to Edward Graham's surprise, entered on the subject of the quarrel.

"Poor little Mademoiselle Bertram!" said he, as his look followed her, "she feels it. Of course she does, the child. She is, as it were, between the anvil and the hammer. It is unfortunate when two such friends quarrel, Monsieur Graham; but of course it will not affect our work?"

And as he said "of course," he looked hard at Edward Graham with his frank blue eyes.

"I hope not, Monsieur Merle," answered the young architect. "Both gentlemen are solemnly pledged to me, who have nothing to do with their quarrel."

"And you have got it down in black and white?"

"I have, Monsieur Merle."

Monsieur Merle looked relieved, then the cloud came back to his honest face.

"And yet people do get out of black and white," he said, with a puzzled look at Edward Graham.

"Let us hope they will not attempt to do so in this case," answered the young man, cheerfully; "besides, they may make it up, Monsieur Merle."

"Monsieur, people who quarrel about hedges,

walls, rights of way, and so on, never do make it up," was the grave reply.

The young architect laughed, but he was disturbed at heart, and his uneasiness induced him to call that same afternoon on Miss Cowper. His secret hope was that he should see Mr. Lennard, and perchance throw in a good word, or at least learn something concerning the quarrel, which was then the talk of Saint Aubin. "Ill news travel fast," says the proverb—perhaps because the sufferers themselves are so quick to spread the tidings.

There seems to be a strange haste in the heart of man to probe misfortune, and reach at once its sorest point. To know more (and to know it sooner) of what he could not help considering a personal evil, was Mr. Graham's real object in calling on Miss Cowper. It was disappointed. Mr. Lennard was out, and Miss Cowper was not merely in the dining-room on the ground-floor, but indifferent to everything save the warming of her little fat feet in the sun, which came in through an open window, affording a green glimpse of garden, and the contemplation of some limes which she had been tracing on a broad sheet of paper.

"The ground-plan of my almshouses, Mr. Graham," said she, with a little flourish of a large paper-knife. "You come in most opportunely. I wanted to consult you. Which would you advise—a large dormitory or cells? Which do you consider most mediæval? *That* is my standard," added Miss Cowper, rubbing the paper-knife along her little snub nose, and looking, or trying to look, hard at him through her little pale grey eyes, that had so little meaning in them.

"Cells are for monks and nuns," began Mr. Graham.

"Just so," interrupted Miss Cowper, "and cells it shall be."

"Dormitories are——"

"Vile," put in Miss Cowper, emphatically—"my own opinion quite."

Mr. Graham did not think it worth his while to set Miss Cowper right as to his real meaning.

"I am a very earnest person, Mr. Graham," resumed Miss Cowper, knitting her smooth eyebrows at him, "and what I mean I go through, as I always tell Mrs. Fay. When will you be in England?"

Mr. Graham hoped to be in England by July

—by August or September he would certainly be there.

"At that time I shall be at Cowper's Hill. If you will call upon me there, and then we will choose the site of the almshouses together, and I shall be happy to look at such designs as you may have to submit to me."

"I shall go to England next month for a week or two," said Mr. Graham, "and if you should then be there, I shall be happy to call upon you, Miss Cowper, and——"

"No, no, no!" she interrupted, waving the paper-knife at him with a sort of scorn for his haste. "Why be in a hurry, Mr. Graham? The Middle Ages were slow, and look at what *they* did! Slow and earnest," meditatively resumed Miss Cowper, shutting her eyes, and going back five hundred years in her musing mood. "I would rather," she continued, still with her eyes shut—"I would rather, Mr. Graham, that you would kindly mature the thought I am leaving with you. Do not be like my nephew, Richard Cowper, fickle and unstable. Richard has disappointed me," she added, with some gloom. "He ought to be a great architect by this, and what is he?" said Miss Cowper,

looking hard at Mr. Graham. "Well, then, be not like him. Let these almshouses be as seed in a rich soil—in short, you know what I mean."

Edward Graham smiled and bowed, then said quietly,

"Mr. Lennard is a practical man; he might suggest——"

"Don't—don't!" interrupted Miss Cowper, rapping the table hard with the paper-knife, and looking rather cross—"don't, Mr. Graham. Mr. Lennard is odiously practical. I like him exceedingly, but I can't endure his ways. Just now he is in a perfect frenzy about a hedge—an immortal being, Mr. Graham, worrying himself and everyone around him about a hedge! If he will go on so, I shall certainly leave Saint Aubin to-morrow," added Miss Cowper, with a touch of temper. "As to the almshouses," she remarked, pushing the sheet of paper towards him, "you will be glad, I daresay, Mr. Graham, to have my ideas on the subject. Here they are, at your service. And do not forget to come and see me at Cowper's Hill. Good morning, Mr. Graham—so glad to have had this interesting conversation with you!"

"Oh! Middle Ages, grand, heroic, and joyous

times," thought Edward Graham, as he left her —"ages of strength, of faith, when the passionate love of saints and the terrible cruelty of all men was at its height—ages of noble churches, abbeys, and cathedrals, of colour and gorgeous raiment—have you come down to this, and is this little pale silly woman in black serge your expounder? No—surely no!"

Somewhat relieved by this little burst of indignation, Mr. Graham began to think that matters might not be so bad as he had feared in the morning. It was a quarrel—of that there could be no doubt—and a quarrel between two of the leading men in a small place is always pregnant with more or less mischief. Nevertheless, he might be able to finish his turret in peace, and that, it must be confessed, was the all-important question for Mr. Graham.

The young architect's time was not all spent at Mr. Bertram's house. He gave, indeed, far more of his attention to this great task—the first great task of his life—than men of his profession usually bestow upon their labours; but he also devoted some of his leisure to the studies which had first brought him to Saint Aubin. The rest of this day he passed in the

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old part of the town, studying some fine carving; and it was only late in the afternoon, and near sunset, that he went and gave a look—he could scarcely have slept well without doing so—to his turret. That turret was now very nearly completed, and though the scaffolding required by the workman who did all the fine Gothic carving still marred the fairness of its proportions, Mr. Graham's practised eye could imagine the distinct outlines, the steep roof, and its graceful vanes, as they would soon appear clear and free on the pale Norman sky. That Norman sky was now fiery red; crimson streaks told of sun and wind for the morrow, and there was a Spring sharpness in the air which did not belie that promise. From the scaffolding on which he stood, Mr. Graham could have surveyed a wide and clear prospect, had he so chosen; but what were Norman field and valley—what were port, sea, and shipping, though clad in the beauty of a fine evening, to the sharp carving of a thistle leaf, and the graceful curve of a trefoil?

"It looks well," he murmured to himself in calm content—"it looks well indeed; the old carvers themselves would say so, could they

look out of their graves and see the work of their successors."

Mr. Graham, as we said, stood on the scaffolding, and as this was on a level with one of the upper windows of the turret, he thence saw the room within. It was finished, so far as building went, but still white with dust and plaster. No door yet divided it from the staircase, which looked like a dark gap, till in that blank aperture suddenly appeared Lily Bertram's pale scared face.

"Oh, Mr. Graham, do come!" she said, in a voice so full of entreaty, that without a word of objection he stepped in to her. "This way," she said quickly, going down. "Oh! don't stop to ask—I will tell you presently. Oh! do come, Mr. Graham!"

He followed her till they stood below, and then, anticipating his questions, and perhaps also his reluctance, Lily said again, but with some passion:

"You must come—some one must come. Papa and Mr. Lennard are having such a terrible quarrel in the garden, and oh! Mr. Graham, Mr. Lennard is beside himself, and I am afraid —I am afraid!" she said, with a wild look up

in his face, and seizing his arm as she spoke.

She wanted to lead him away, and seemed to fear his resistance; but Mr. Graham was not unwilling to accompany her to the scene of action. There is an excitement in the display of human passions, or in the mortal danger of some suffering creature, which few can resist. That it was which gave its frightful fascination to the dying struggles of gladiators, even though their passion was for the mere preservation of life. That it is which gives its terrible charm to the battle, the siege, and the shipwreck—to all in which man seeks to prevail over man, or to conquer the cruel might of nature. But matters had not come to such extremities when Mr. Graham reached the scene of the conflict, and yet Mr. Lennard had carried on the war with a high hand.

Throughout the difference Mr. Bertram had been so determinedly polite in his defence of his daughter's rights, that he had prolonged its duration to what, considering Mr. Lennard's irascible temper, might be held unnatural limits; but even his long patience had given way, and a breach had come, as Miss Bertram had told Mr. Graham that morning, and Mr.

Bertram had gone off to Dieppe to get legal opinion on the subject. Perhaps Mr. Lennard was not aware of this fact; perhaps, even had he known it, it would only have spurred him on. Did he rely, for good reasons of his own, on Mr. Bertram's continued forbearance, or did he, as Edward Graham often thought later, wish to sever his long friendship, and give up a worship which had perchance grown troublesome? It is hard to say, but he certainly took the best means of accomplishing the latter object. Whether or not he knew the purpose of Mr. Bertram's journey, he knew at least that he was away, and taking advantage of the fact, he procured workmen, and had the hedge cut down to the very earth. The work of destruction had gone on without hindrance or interruption. The hedge, which divided a field belonging to Mr. Lennard from the end of Mr. Bertram's long straggling garden, was wholly invisible from the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Mr. Bertram was away; Lily had spent the day at Mrs. Scot's; the servants had kept indoors, amusing themselves in the kitchen whilst their master was absent, and no one even suspected what was going on, till Mr.

Bertram, on his return, and being still elated with the favourable opinion he had got in Dieppe, went to look at the hedge with secret triumph in his heart. He found it cut down, torn up, utterly destroyed, its promise of May blossoms ruthlessly annihilated, and a little bird, which had made its nest in the thickest boughs, fluttering around the spot with a low, pitiful cry. No barrier, no defence now stood between his land and Mr. Lennard's field, where a dun cow was grazing quietly the sweet low grass, whilst the long red evening light passed over the landscape with that serene beauty which seems to set at defiance man's pitiful cares and poor mean passions.

All might still have gone well, or at least peaceably, if Mr. Bertram had been allowed to get over his natural indignation in silence and in solitude; but it unfortunately happened that when his resentment was at its height, Mr. Lennard came up to the spot, walking through his field with a workman behind him. To all appearance he no more saw Mr. Bertram than if the place where that gentleman stood had been filled with mere vacant air.

"You will see to that early to-morrow,

Mathieu. Dig deep; I want a good wall, a thick wall, a high one. I want to be at home on my own land, and not to be overlooked by troublesome and impertinent neighbours."

"Mr. Lennard," said Mr. Bertram, who was very white, "you have taken a rash step."

"You heard," said Mr. Lennard, turning to Mathieu—"a high wall, above all things."

Mr. Bertram stepped across the boundary-line where the hedge had been.

"Mr. Lennard," said he, walking up to him.

"Trespass if you dare!" cried the other, turning upon him with the fierceness of a tiger. "Mathieu, I call you to witness that this man is on my land."

Mr. Bertram drew himself up with some scorn.

"The possession of land is a novelty to you, Mr. Lennard," said he, with a smile which exasperated his enemy.

Mr. Lennard was a vulgar man by nature. His wrath now found a vent in oaths and unseemly language, and Miss Bertram, who had come up unseen, heard him with horror and fear. She ran up to her father, and throwing herself between him and his enemy, she cried in her passion,

"Oh! you bad man, how dare you be so wicked!"

"Just hear the little beggar!" answered Mr. Lennard, with a scornful laugh, and still more scornful forefinger. "Mathieu, you see her—"

"Miss Bertram," interrupted Mr. Bertram, turning on his daughter with a sternness to which she was unused, "I command you to leave this spot immediately."

The child drew back half afraid, but though she obeyed this imperative behest, it was only to go and fetch Mr. Graham.

When the young man came up, the two quondam friends stood face to face, silent, angry, with pale faces full of wrath and hate.

"So you are come!" said Mr. Lennard, turning on Mr. Graham with anything but a friendly aspect. "Well, I call you to witness that this man is on my land—you see him—he is on my land! I have warned him off, and he is still on my land. Remember it."

So saying, he walked away through the field, followed by the workman. Not till he was out of sight did Mr. Bertram condescend to step back to his own side of the hedge, and then he assumed a more composed, collected, and condescending look and manner than ever.

"A very ill-bred man," he apologetically remarked to Mr. Graham. "That hedge was very fine, and very old. The evil is irreparable. It was barbarous to cut it down; it pained me to see it lying withered on the earth, all its loveliness destroyed; the birds'-nest, too, is gone—my little daughter was very fond of that nest. The same birds came every Spring; but Mr. Lennard never had the least idea of refinement."

And so he talked, treating the quarrel, and even those violent measures of Mr. Lennard's which had led to it, with the same lofty assumption of gentlemanlike superiority and composure.

"It is a pity matters went so far," Edward Graham could not help saying.

"A great pity," assented Mr. Bertram; "but men of Mr. Lennard's temper will not be quiet. I have committed a great mistake—a great mistake, Mr. Graham. I should have remembered that Mr. Lennard was a *parvenu*, and that a *parvenu's* low nature *will* come out. Lily, my dear girl, what *are* you crying for?" And as he put the question, Mr. Bertram kindly laid his white hand on the shoulder of his little daughter, who vainly tried to repress her sobs as she walked by his side.

"I—I can't help it," half sobbed, half cried Lily. "Mr. Lennard is—is such a bad man! I hate him!" added Lily, stamping her foot, and clenching her little hands.

Mr. Bertram was amazed and even angry (in a calm way) at Miss Bertram's want of dignified composure. He condescended to argue with her on the subject. What could be expected from a man of Mr. Lennard's birth and rearing? Lily heard in silence, but the angry flush remained on her young cheek, and the indignant light in her dark eyes. Mr. Bertram was cool, as became a man fashioned from the rarest Kaolin; but Lily had inherited from her beautiful great-grandmother a more plebeian clay. She felt keenly, passionately, and angrily, and what she felt she showed with the imprudent frankness of daring youth. Mr. Graham, still walking by father and daughter, compared them with one another, and had his own thoughts. Mr. Bertram's calmness surprised and perplexed him. Was he going to bear so patiently with this gross insult? And if not, how would it all end?

CHAPTER IV.

LONG before it sat down to breakfast the next morning, Saint Aubin had discussed the great quarrel, and decided on its merits. Saint Aubin, man, woman, and child, took part with Mr. Bertram against Mr. Lennard. Saint Aubin, French and British, abused the one and exalted the other. Mr. Lennard's parvenuism especially was dwelt upon with cutting sarcasm. Here was a man sprung from nothing vying with another man in whose veins flowed azure blood; here was a landlord who had not been a year in possession of his present abode disputing the rights of one whose ancestors were actually represented in the world-known sculptures on the walls of the house he lived in! This was bad enough; but what made matters worse against Mr. Lennard, was Mr. Bertram's mag-

nanimity. Mr. Bertram had declared that he would not wage war against his daughter's godfather. He would wait till this aberration, momentary he trusted, of Mr. Lennard's intellect had subsided, and then he was sure Mr. Lennard's own good feelings would show him the matter in its proper light. He was afraid, Mr. Bertram was, that their old friendship would never resume its ancient footing; but he trusted that his forbearance would prevent matters from coming to a crisis. Nothing in short could be more amiably dignified than Mr. Bertram.

"I suppose he will win the day so far as opinion goes," thought Edward Graham, as he slowly walked towards Mrs. Scot's that evening. "Saint Aubin is all——"

Here a man coming down the street pushed against him, and at once exclaimed, in light, cheerful tones,

"My dear fellow, I hope I have not knocked you down!"

"You have not," answered Mr. Graham, rather grimly. "You seem in a great hurry."

"Frightful!" said Mr. Cowper. "Just got a telegram. Most important business. My poor

aunt is awfully put out. By-the-by, do get that job of the almshouses out of her. Pity I did not stick to architecture, is it not? But then why did not my aunt come into her property in time? Well, good-bye. Good luck to you." And he vanished down the street.

"I wonder why I so dislike that man," thought Edward Graham, listening to his distant step. "True he wronged me, but so long ago. He has forgotten it. Why can I not forget it too?" And he sighed with some compunction as he reached Mrs. Scot's door. He found Mrs. Scot and Mrs. Petherick discussing the quarrel.

"I am saying, Mr. Graham, that only a born gentleman could behave as Mr. Bertram has behaved," remarked Mrs. Scot, in the tone of one who delivers oracles.

This she said as the young man went and took his usual place nigh Lily Scot, who received him with a smile of shy welcome, whilst her sisters made room for him with demure gravity.

"But then Mr. Bertram is a gentleman, you know," chimed in Mrs. Petherick. "I am sure you are all for Mr. Bertram, Mr. Graham," she added emphatically.

Mr. Graham did not choose to make any direct answer to this appeal. Mrs. Petherick, not a whit discouraged, continued in the tone of virtue resigned to the incurable wickedness of this world,

"Of course Captain Jekyll is all for Mr. Lennard. Mrs. Morgan declared it was quite enough to make one unhappy in one's mind to hear how he goes on. 'To be sure the hedge was yours, sir,' says he, rolling his big eyes—quite frogs' eyes, I think. 'You did well to cut it up, by Jove! you did, sir.' Odious man!"

Mrs. Scot, who had heard Mrs. Petherick with some impatience, here remarked with a look of judicial dignity,

"I must say that Mr. Lennard's conduct in this matter——"

Here the sudden appearance of Mr. Lennard himself, who came in unannounced, with the familiarity of an old friend, checked the flow of Mrs. Scot's eloquence. With a discreet cough she sat up on her sofa and said benignantly,

"So kind of you, Mr. Lennard! And Miss Cowper, dear Miss Cowper, how *is* Miss Cowper?"

Mr. Lennard threw himself on a chair, thrust

his hands in his pockets, nodded with offensive patronage to Edward Graham, stared at Mrs. Petherick, and only relaxed in his aggressive demeanour when Lily Scot came up to him with a cup of tea. She stood before him sweet and fair, a modest and graceful Hebe, with a cup of good-will in her hand, and gentle peace in her aspect.

"Thank you, my dear," he kindly said. "You *are* a good girl!"

"I suppose dear Miss Cowper had a headache," persisted Mrs. Scot.

"Oh! I hope not," cried Mrs. Petherick, clasping her hands. "Don't say that dear Miss Cowper has a headache!"

"Dear Miss Cowper is a fool!" sneered Mr. Lennard, ignoring Mrs. Petherick. "Come," he added, boring Mrs. Scot through and through with his most gimlet look, "no nonsense. What were you saying about Mr. Lennard's conduct when I came in?"

"Nothing," answered Mrs. Scot, with some spirit; "for you entered the room, Mr. Lennard, before my sentence was finished."

"Not amiss," muttered Mr. Lennard, sipping his tea, "not amiss; but shall I tell you

what you were going to say, Mrs. Scot? Why, just what all those fools in Saint Aubin are saying. Mr. Bertram is such a gentleman. Is he? Mr. Lennard is such a *parvenu!* Mr. Bertram is so forbearing! Is he? I'll forbear him!" added Mr. Lennard, viciously. "Tell him that when you see him, Mrs. Scot," added Mr. Lennard, with a short dry laugh. "Forbearing! Oh! yes, all Saint Aubin has taken up the song. Mr. Bertram is so forbearing because he is such a gentleman, is he?"

A dead silence followed Mr. Lennard's words. Mrs. Petherick closed her eyes in ineffable disgust. Jane and Louisa looked half frightened, and their elder sister sat with downcast look and dejected mien. Mrs. Scot looked as she felt, much affronted, and Edward Graham, watching every turn of Mr. Lennard's angry face, and construing his offensive manner to himself, wished with a sigh that his turret were finished, and he well out of all this. Lily Scot's soft voice broke the awkward silence.

"Another cup of tea, Mr. Lennard?" she said gently

"No, my dear, thanks. By-the-by, I forgot, Miss Cowper does send her love, and——"

Here the door flew open, and Lily Bertram burst into the room, flushed and breathless.

"Oh! Mrs. Scot," she cried, excitedly, "only think——" but seeing Mr. Lennard, she checked herself, and mindful of Mr. Bertram's lessons, drew up her slight girlish figure with much dignity, and said, with rather a stately bearing, "I shall come again when you are disengaged, Mrs. Scot. Good evening." And she vanished as quickly as she had appeared.

Mr. Lennard chuckled, and looked, Edward Graham thought, both spiteful and ill-natured; but he rose too.

"I shall come again when you are disengaged," said he, mimicking Lily Bertram's manner. "Good evening, Mrs. Scot."

He nodded all round, and spite Mrs. Scot's polite entreaties, so left them.

When the great gate had fairly closed upon the visitor, a clamour against him rose in Mrs. Scot's sitting-room.

"Mr. Lennard is getting quite odious," said Mrs. Scot, still affronted.

"My dear Mrs. Scot," said Mrs. Petherick, rising to go and tell Mrs. Morgan what had taken place, before Captain Jekyll could possibly

know anything about it, "if you were not the sweetest-tempered woman——"

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Petherick," interrupted Mrs. Scot, with a touch of temper which certainly gave warrant to the truth of her assertion, "but I was never thought sweet-tempered before. I was always considered to have plenty of spirit."

"Sweet-tempered people always have, dear," said Mrs. Petherick, soothingly.

"My dear Mrs. Petherick," rather shrilly exclaimed Mrs. Scot, who was certainly inclined for a quarrel, "what do you mean by calling me dear? I am too old a mamma for that, I assure you."

"But then you look so young," pleaded Mrs. Petherick, decidedly alarmed at the irascible mood of her sweet-tempered friend. "Dear Lily's eldest sister, I always say."

Mrs. Scot did not answer. She had calmed down, not so much on account of Mrs. Peterick's discreet praise, as because her little burst of wrath had nearly spent itself. Who has not noticed how one quarrel leads to twenty more? How when the social air is laden with that fatal electricity, people who really have nothing to

do with it, yet seem to receive and transmit the primitive shock. This, good reader, was Mrs. Scot's case, she was not really angry at being thought sweet-tempered, nor at being called dear, nor was she foolishly pleased at looking young, but she had been put out by this fatal quarrel of Mr. Bertram's and Mr. Lennard's, and she felt bound to vent her annoyance upon some one. Mrs. Petherick chanced to be at hand—that was all.

"Well, I think I really must leave you," said Mrs. Petherick, with a cheerful assumption of being detained by Mrs. Scot and her family, and of tearing herself away—"so sorry; I always do enjoy my evenings here so much. Good night, dear" (this "dear" was for Lily, not for Mrs. Scot)—"good night, Mr. Graham—*good* night, Mrs. Scot." And so, with cheerful good nights, and graceful nods and smiles, Mrs. Petherick took her leave.

"I wish Mrs. Petherick would not come so often!" crossly said Mrs. Scot. "As to Mr. Lennard, I never wish to see him again."

"There never was such a bear!" cried Louisa and Jane in a breath. "And, Lily," giggled Jane, "*did* you see how grand Miss Bertram looked?"

"Hush!" softly said Lily.

Even Mr. Graham, though habitually reserved and silent, should speak.

"That man means mischief," said he, looking at his betrothed, who, sighing over her work, said, a little dreamily—

"I wonder if Mr. Richard Cowper could interfere before it is too late?"

That look of ill-subdued scorn, which, do what he would, always rose to Edward Graham's face when he heard the name of the man whom he disliked, now flashed across it as he said:

"Don't you know Dick Cowper yet, Miss Scot? I met him a while ago. He had just received a telegram summoning him home to England, on most important business, of course," ironically continued Edward Graham.

Miss Scot smiled demurely, but did not commit herself either way by uttering a word. The mischief which Mr. Graham feared, and which Miss Bertram had come to tell, he did not learn until the next morning. The young man had stayed within to write several letters, one of which was all-important, in his opinion. It was addressed to an old schoolfellow of his,

who was now a contributor to the *Building Review*. Edward Graham was urging him to come over to Saint Aubin and look at his work. "I do not ask you to praise what you may think worthy of censure," wrote he, "but simply to see what I have attempted. If I deserve praise, you will give it ungrudgingly, I know, and it will do me a world of good; and if I deserve censure, I shall learn from your blame what I have failed in. Moreover——"

Here a sound of voices below made Mr. Graham lay down his pen and listen.

"The City of Jerusalem," Miss Cowper was saying—"now that is earnest."

"It is a very old house," said Lily Scot's soft voice.

"Mr. Graham lives there, I know," put in Miss Bertram's gay tones.

"Well, but where is the carriage?" urged Miss Cowper—"where can it be?"

"Here," said Miss Bertram. "Come in the yard with me, Miss Cowper."

Edward Graham put by his writing, went downstairs, and entered the yard of the inn. He found Miss Cowper and her two companions already there, and a travelling-carriage, to

which the horses were even then being harnessed, told her errand. Miss Cowper was going away.

"There's Mr. Graham!" cried Miss Bertram.

Miss Scot blushed and smiled, and Miss Cowper gave him a patronizing nod.

"Good morning, Mr. Graham. I am going, as you see; I could stand Mr. Lennard's dreadful matter-of-fact no longer. Where is my carpet-bag? I never travel with more than a carpet-bag, Mr. Graham. I am glad to see you, and to express to you in person what I feel on the matter of Mr. Lennard's conduct to Mr. Bertram. To summon a gentleman of Mr. Bertram's birth, breeding, and position—a man who can trace back his ancestry to—to—in short, to summon him for trespass, it is vile, Mr. Graham—vile! I resolved to show my disapprobation at once by leaving Mr. Lennard's house, and I would not even drive off from his door. Besides," added Miss Cowper, with a suddenly sharp and shrill voice, "Mr. Lennard wanted to draw me in. Mr. Lennard wanted me to give my money to his schemes. It is not because I have some money," continued Miss Cowper, with much heat, "that I am go-

ing to squander it on Mr. Lennard's hobbies about polytechnics, and institutes, and other heathen fancies."

In short, it was plain enough to Mr. Graham that some imprudent attempt of Mr. Lennard's on the purse of Miss Cowper had as much to do with that lady's precipitate departure, as her indignation at the summons issued by Mr. Lennard against his former friend. Having seen her carpet-bag stowed into the carriage, Miss Cowper kissed Miss Bertram and Miss Scot. "Good-bye, my dear little Bertram," said she, affectionately patting Miss Bertram's rosy cheek. "Come and see me at Cowper's Hill, and be head Sister, you know. My dear Miss Scot, I am so sorry that I have not seen more of you this time. *So* glad to have made your acquaintance, Mr. Graham! Hope you will bear my almshouses in mind."

So saying, Miss Cowper stepped into the carriage, which rattled out of the yard, rattled down the street, and soon vanished.

"I like Miss Cowper," said Miss Bertram warmly; "she took papa's part, and I like those who like papa, and I hate those who don't like him; and how dare Mr. Lennard summon

papa before the Juge de Paix, who is his friend? How dare he!—and for trespass, too! Oh, I do so hate Mr. Lennard!" cried Miss Bertram in a rage.

Lily Scot tried to soothe her as they went home, Mr. Graham walking slowly by their side; but the summons stuck in poor Miss Bertram's little throat. It made her eyes bright as diamonds, it brought red roses to her cheeks, and even the sunny gleams in her brown hair seemed to sparkle all the more for her anger.

That summons was the event of the day, and Mr. Bertram made the most of it. He ignored it, indeed, and seemed to have forgotten all about such a trifle, until some indignant friend reminded him of the fact, when he would laugh languidly, and utter an, "Ah, to be sure!—poor Mr. Lennard!—a very wrong-headed man!" which, so to speak, annihilated Mr. Lennard, and put him entirely out of sight. But though Mr. Bertram had forgotten all about the summons which was for the morrow, he went a good deal about Saint Aubin all that day, and showed himself far more than was his wont. He was seen lounging on the quays talking to men of every degree in most affable fashion.

He looked in at a friend in the reading-rooms (where he was never seen), and chatted and laughed over the *Times* for half an hour. He dropped in at two or three houses where his visits had become as those of angels, few and far between, and where he was welcomed with a rush of loyalty and enthusiasm which a sovereign might have envied.

"I do believe," cried Mrs. Scot, on the evening of that day, addressing her daughter and future son-in-law—"I do believe I never saw Mr. Bertram—our Mr. Bertram—looking more aristocratic, perfect, and handsome—never!" She might have added, that never had Mr. Bertram's white hand been whiter, nor had his diamond ring flashed more brightly. "Mark my words, Mr. Graham, you are a witness, and will see it all—mark my words, I say, Mr. Bertram will never have looked more calmly grand than he will look to-morrow."

She spoke triumphantly and with evident enjoyment of the quarrel which had been a godsend to all Saint Aubin; but Mr. Graham heard her with a grave and anxious aspect. He was indeed one of the witnesses summoned by Mr Lennard to prove the trespass; and though

Mr. Bertram had graciously assured him it did not matter in the least, the young architect was sadly vexed at being mixed up in the contest of these two men. Right so far as he knew and could see, was wholly on Mr. Bertram's side; and even though his testimony must needs be limited to facts, he could not, and indeed would not, prevent his feeling on the merits of the case from being seen. Now Mr. Lennard had been hostile of late, venting on Mr. Bertram's architect some of the irritation which Mr. Bertram himself had caused. He had been carping, unjust, and capricious—what might he not be now?

Miss Scot saw that he was anxious, and she told him so.

"Yes, I am anxious after a fashion," he said cheerfully; "and yet you know, my darling, that this cannot really hurt me. I have their pledge—the turret will soon be finished and paid for—what then need I care personally for the animosity of Mr. Bertram and Mr. Lennard?"

No doubt this was true; but then Mr. Graham did not add that he wished in his heart his

turret were finished and he in England, there to reap the honour due to all the care, thought, and labour he had bestowed upon it.

CHAPTER V.

IN the Basse-ville of Saint Aubin, but on the frontier, as it were, of the Haute-ville, there stood then—it has been pulled down since that time—an ancient house, which Mr. Graham had sketched when he came first to the old Norman city. The house was not very remarkable from an architectural point of view, but it was wonderfully picturesque. Especially had it midway between the first and second floors in a sheltered angle—for it was full of corners—a little niche with a conical slate roof to it, in which stood the statue of the Divine Mother with her babe in her arms, and a vase full of flowers at her feet. The house was dark and old, the statue was much defaced, but the flowers were fresh and bright. They told the story of an ancient faith, and of a worship ever

new. Of generations that fade away into the dimness of time and of other generations that come up young and strong; of that prayer which ever rises from man's heart to God age after age, as flowers spring from the bosom of the earth year after year. Some such thoughts as these passed through the mind of Edward Graham whilst he was sketching the gloomy façade, the little niche, and the bright flowers; but he also noticed that the door of the house stood open, and that a good many people passed in and out.

"What is there going on in there?" he asked of a boy.

The boy stared.

"Why, that is the Juge de Paix's," said he.

The next day, his sketch being finished, Edward Graham went in. The Juge de Paix is a magistrate who decides summarily on those plain cases which else might slip out of the meshes of the law. He deals out prison, fine, or mere reprimand, according to his own discretion. Crime and excitement do not haunt that quiet court which, as a rule, is half empty. Who cares to look at paltry culprits or to hear of trifling delinquencies? It so happened that

nothing was going on when Edward Graham entered the low dark room, very bare and dull, where the Juge sat at his desk. He was leaning back in his chair, trying to take a nod, in spite of an obstinate fly which would alight on his bald head, and at which he slapped rather viciously with a red silk pocket-handkerchief. He stared at the young man when he came in, then shut his eyes and made another attempt to doze—in vain, the fly was too much for the law. The Juge opened his eyes and stared again at Edward Graham, who, having seen enough, walked out.

But very different indeed was the aspect of room and Juge on the day when Mr. Bertram was to appear there. The room was crammed hours before the case came on, the Juge looked grave and consequential. As Edward Graham was going in he saw Mrs. Petherick standing outside in a state of some excitement.

"I was quite time enough, I am sure I was," said she, addressing a little old Frenchman by her side, "but of course I thought there were reserved seats for the ladies."

"And were there not?" asked the little old gentleman, drily.

"No, Monsieur, there were not," was the triumphant but injured reply.

"Oh! Mr. Graham, you will take me in!"

But Mr. Graham was already in, the crowd had closed upon him, and though he looked round on hearing Mrs. Petherick's appeal, he only shook his head, smiled, and disappeared. Indeed it was plain that even had he been so inclined, it was too late for him to convoy Mrs. Petherick within.

"So the Petherick Gazette has missed it," said a facetious voice in his ear. "A witness, are you? Lucky fellow!—you will have all the fun!"

Mr. Graham had just time to recognize Captain Jekyll's red face before he made his way to the bench on which the workman Mathieu was already seated, these two being the only witnesses of the case. They had been summoned by Mr. Lennard; Mr. Bertram had called none. All Saint Aubin, French and British, but British especially, had come to see these two men. Every face, every eye, every look was turned towards them. The very windows—the room being on the ground-floor, had been invaded outside, and every now and then Mr. Graham,

from where he sat, could catch a glimpse of Mrs. Petherick's hat and feather appearing for a moment, and then again eclipsed by some masculine head and shoulders. He saw it as he saw twenty more of the insignificant details before him, as he saw the crowd, the desk of the Juge, the low ceiling, the dark walls, he saw these things, but did not look at them, he could look at nothing but at Mr. Lennard and Mr. Bertram, at the two friends now facing each other in enmity, all the more bitter that the cause of quarrel was so paltry. Mr. Bertram's bearing was characteristic. He looked very calm and dignified, perhaps, too, a little bored. He really seemed a spectator, and an uninterested one, waiting for what was going to take place. Mr. Lennard, on the contrary, was all restlessness and impatience. He bit his nails, he looked at the ceiling, he stared moodily before him. Never had his little bilious face worn a yellower tinge than it did this morning. He looked guilty, if ever man did, and if the crowd could have committed such a mistake, it would assuredly have set him down as the trespasser.

"I wonder if he repents," thought Edward Graham.

The two antagonists having been called, the proceedings began with a question which soon set his doubts at rest. The Juge de Paix bade Monsieur Lennard explain his grievance.

"Monsieur le Juge, I cannot," deprecatingly answered Mr. Lennard, shrugging his shoulders. "It would not be fair. Monsieur Bertram is not here. I must wait till he comes."

The Juge stared, and there was a loud laugh in the court.

"Monsieur Bertram is present," said the Juge, after a pause. "He is standing there before you."

Mr. Lennard turned to Mr. Bertram, and Edward Graham, who was watching them both, saw Lily's father wince as he met the pitiless look fastened upon him.

"No," said Mr. Lennard, deliberately, "that is not Ralph Philibert Geraldine Bertram, son of William Philibert Geraldine Bertram, that is Joseph Jones, son of Mary Smith and Joseph Jones." And Mr. Lennard chuckled as he uttered the plebeian names, for though they were lost on the French part of the audience, they had their full effect on the British portion. A long low murmur rose when he had spoken,

then a dead silence fell on the court, and every man stared at his neighbour first, then at Mr. Bertram.

"Perhaps Monsieur can explain," said the Juge, turning a puzzled look on Mr. Bertram.

He got no answer. The son of Mary Smith and Joseph Jones stood as when the blow had fallen upon him, but his cheek was sallow, his look was dull, and there were drops of perspiration on his brow. Edward Graham's heart ached for the agony of the man, but at the same time he longed to know more, and he thrust his head forward, and leaned his ear as eagerly as any in court.

"We know no other Monsieur Bertram than this," said the Juge, turning a little impatiently to Mr. Lennard, "therefore——"

"He a Bertram!" interrupted the irritable little man, striking the floor with his stick—"he is a Jones every inch of him, a Jones he was born, and a Jones he will die, and a Jones is a Jones," concluded Mr. Lennard, in the tone with which he had once said, "A griffin is a griffin."

"Monsieur le Juge," said Mr. Bertram, with all his old dignity, but Edward Graham noticed

that his hand was thrust in his coat-pocket, and the diamond ring kept out of sight, "will you allow me to utter a few words of explanation? You will—thank you. I expected no less from your candour. I am sorry to trespass on your time, but I have been attacked—I must defend myself. The late Mr. Bertram and my mother met in youth. They loved, but were parted by their friends. Each married and had a child. Mr. Bertram's died; my mother's lived. They were free when they met again, and this time they allowed no one to divide them. 'Mary, your son is my son,' said Mr. Bertram to my mother. And it was so. I ought to have been a Bertram, and I became one. I took the position of which I had, I may say, been defrauded, since Mr. Bertram was really the father my mother had wished to give her child. When Mr. Bertram died, and you all have known that noble and generous man, he left us what he had to leave—wealth and name. That is my tale—a plain one, an honest one. I defy my enemies, if I have any, to deny the truth of a word that I have uttered."

This little oration, delivered in fluent French, was spoken with a gentlemanly and temperate

candour, which ought to have moved Mr. Lennard himself, but which unfortunately did not.

"Oh! no," said he, nodding, "I will deny nothing; but I will add something. When Mary Smith, who had been a milliner, died, you put the name of Mr. Bertram's first wife on her tombstone, and she became Constance de Vaux. Ha! ha! And when you married you bribed the maire, the late Monsieur Denis, to put the name of Mr. Bertram's dead son on the *affiche*, and to let you sign your real one on the register. Ha! ha! I know all about it!"

"You do," calmly answered Mr. Bertram, "for in this I followed your advice, and you kindly undertook the negotiation with Monsieur Denis. I confess," added Mr. Bertram, with much dignity, "that I was reluctant to let such private matters, relating as they did to the early and unhappy love of my beloved parents, be discussed by idle tongues. I may have been to blame, but delicacy was my motive; and now, Monsieur le Juge, may I beg you to decide this absurd matter of the trespass for which I was brought here."

And his white hand was brought out, and the

diamond ring flashed as brightly as ever, and Mr. Bertram was Ralph Philibert Geraldine Bertram every inch of him once more. He had acted the part so long, that even this terrible exposure could not make him leave it off. And then he was so perfect in it, and his handsome person, refined features, white hand, and elegant manners suited it so well, as he knew. The late Mr. Bertram had been a little short fat man, with a pug-nose, a good-natured laugh, and a foolish face. Nature had been as niggardly of her gifts to this last scion of a noble line as she had been liberal to his lowly-born stepson.

The son of Mary Smith had early felt that he ought to have been a Bertram. He had early taken the name and assumed the position of his dead step-brother, and when his mother died he had quite naturally inscribed the name of her noble predecessor on her grave. What there was of disingenuous in such proceedings he had glossed over to his conscience by a law of "the fitness of things" which he had made for himself. His mother was a lovely, elegant woman, naturally refined, and certainly very clever. She ought to have been Constance de

Vaux, and to give her that lady's name in death was only a graceful tribute to her many gifts, and so Mr. Bertram, who was an amiable, plausible man, had arranged matters to his own liking without hindrance or scruple. There was no living Bertram to interfere; and the dead, however haughty they may have been, submit patiently enough to greater wrongs than this. An accident had put Mr. Lennard in possession of his secret, but that gentleman kept it well, whether through personal regard or for the exquisite pleasure of seeing all Saint Aubin gulled by this charming impostor, there is no knowing, and so Mr. Bertram was safe till the great breach came, and with it exposure in the face of the little world he had ruled so long. But the first crushing moment over, Mr. Bertram rallied, and bore himself bravely, and it was with perfect composure that he put that question concerning the trespass, which was to remind the Juge that he (Mr. Bertram) had had quite enough of the whole affair. The magistrate turned to Mr. Lennard with an inquiring look.

"Let him go—let him go," said Mr. Lennard, with a sneer. "I have said my say, and that will do."

He walked away with a short little wicked laugh, and the crowd dispersed. Mr. Bertram, calm and self-possessed as ever, bowed courteously to the Juge, and left the court with his usual leisurely gait and bearing. He passed close by Mr. Graham without seeing him, but waved his hand gracefully to Colonel Warner, an old officer on half-pay, with whom he had had a long chat at the reading-room the day before. Colonel Warner looked a little foolish, and nodded hurriedly as he took Captain Jekyll's arm and walked down the street. He had not yet made up his mind as to whether he should cut Mr. Bertram or keep on with him.

"By Jove! sir," said he to Captain Jekyll, "the fellow is such a handsome fellow that he ought to be a Bertram; and indeed——"

"I tickled him, eh!" here put in Mr. Lennard, with his little wicked laugh. "I Jonesed him, eh!" he added, thrusting his sallow face under the Colonel's very nose.

Colonel Warner drew back, gave Mr. Lennard a broad stare, deliberately turned his back upon him, and saying to Captain Jekyll, in his loudest and most distinct bass voice, "By Jove! sir, if there's a crawling thing I hate, it is a

sneak, sir!" he walked away, and left Mr Lennard standing alone in the sunlit street, a branded man.

CHAPTER VI.

THE old Colonel's verdict was that of all Saint Aubin. Saint Aubin, French and British, did not make up its mind at once how to treat Mr. Bertram's delinquency, but it did not hesitate one moment concerning Lennard. Saint Aubin was very angry at having been cheated so long by the son of Mary Smith and Joseph Jones, but it chose to visit the heavier portion of its wrath on Mr. Lennard's head. What right had he to deceive them? Why had he not enlightened that innocent, confiding Saint Aubin? Why, possessing such important knowledge, had he abetted the deceiver? His tardy revelation only showed that he was a traitor to his friend, as well as to his fellow-townsmen! After being silent so long, what right had he to speak?—poor little Lily Ber-

tram's godfather, too! It was simply abominable. So spoke Saint Aubin, showing itself very lenient to the *pseudo* Bertram.

Mrs. Scot was more than lenient. Mr. Graham, who had not shown himself at the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold that day, very reluctantly appeared at Mrs. Scot's in the evening. He dreaded the lady's indiscreet tongue and questions. To his relief Mrs. Scot was too much excited and engrossed by her own feelings to trouble herself with the opinions or sentiments of any other person. On learning the great news, she had at once held a council of war with her three daughters.

"Lily," she had said, with something like severity, "your position as a member of Mr. Bertram's household is one of the greatest delicacy. I trust to your discretion never to forget it. As for you, Jane and Louisa," she added, turning on her younger daughters, "I beg you will remember that our daily bread hangs on Mr. Bertram's pleasure. We are wholly in his power. You must forget the very name of Jones. As to millinery, and all that, you must never allude to such subjects with Miss Bertram. It would be the grossest breach of the convenances.

Bertram or no Bertram, Mr. Bertram is still quite rich, and our friend and neighbour. If any fatal mistake should occur, and that through your folly, or imprudence, or ill-nature, we should lose the support of Mr. Bertram, your mother would never forgive you."

Jane and Louisa protested that they would be discreet, and silent as the grave, and not breathe a word to Lily Bertram which could give that young lady offence.

"Remember," urged their mother, with an impressive and warning forefinger, "nothing about millinery, or Jones, or all that."

"Oh! no, nothing," cried the girls, who, to say the truth, were rather scared at the whole story; and though not particularly discreet, were yet thoroughly alive to the necessity of silence in a matter which concerned their own welfare so nearly as Lily's daily engagement with Mr. Bertram's daughter.

But this mixture of purely personal considerations with Mr. Bertram's exposure and history did not tend to soothe Mrs. Scot's ruffled spirit. Mr. Graham found her sitting up, and fanning her flushed face with her pocket-handkerchief. Lily was engaged with her sisters, as

usual, and the light of the lamp which fell on her fair young face showed Mr. Graham some signs of trouble and disturbance there.

"Are you not well?" he asked, in a tender half-whisper.

"Not very well," she answered, with her gentle smile.

"Who could be well, Mr. Graham?" asked Mrs. Scot, in an injured tone. "I have had spasm all day; but then I am of that fine, sensitive nature, like perfect and delicate machinery, that the least thing puts me out of order. I think Mr. Lennard ought to be tabooed out of all decent society, for upsetting people so. I am sure when Mrs. Morgan came in and told me what a dead set he made at Mr. Bertram, you could have knocked me down with a feather. I hope he will never show his face here again. My goodness! Is that he?"

The great front gate had been knocked at and opened, and a visitor was now at the door of the sitting-room; but when that door opened it was not Mr. Lennard's bilious visage, but Miss Bertram's rosy face that peeped in, reconnoitring.

"I was afraid he might be here, you know,"

said she, opening the door wide, and springing forward into the room with that delightfully free-and-easy motion of youth; "but I am so glad he is not. I hope I shall never see him again, horrid man!" cried Lily Bertram, with eyes that sparkled, half with anger, half with tears. "And yet," she added, laughing, and flinging off her white hood, and throwing it on a chair—"and yet, Mrs. Scot, is it not glorious how, when it came to the point, he could not face papa, but had to give up the trespass. But it was too bad of papa, was it not, not to let me be in court, for then," added Lily, taking her place at the table, and sitting down to it with both her elbows leaning upon it, after her own undecorous fashion—"for then I should have seen it all, you know."

She looked round at them with mingled triumph and regret in her dark eyes. Mrs. Scot looked relieved and yet somewhat perplexed at Miss Bertram's evident ignorance of the facts of the case. Miss Scot said "My dear," because she did not know what else to say. Jane and Louisa exchanged looks, and were beginning to titter when their mother uttered a severe "Louisa, Jane," which made them mute; and

Edward Graham, gazing at the child, so bright, so exulting, so unconscious of the shame which had fallen on her innocent head, felt full of a great pity.

"But it is not over," pursued Miss Bertram, again nodding at them. "Papa went to the Juge de Paix's to show his respect for the law, but it is not because Mr. Lennard has dropped the trespass that papa will drop the hedge. He will have a law-suit, a real law-suit, to defend my rights, and the hedge shall be put back, not for its own sake, but for the right," added Lily, with another flash of her fine eyes.

"That child has nothing of her father in her," thought Mr. Graham, who was watching her keenly. "She has not his beauty, but neither has she his shallow, plausible nature. There is in her a deeper strain—the strain, I fancy, of that plebeian great-grandmother, who wore the tricolour cockade, and bade the captain give her back her dead husband."

"I am very sorry all this has happened," murmured Mrs. Scot, who was at a loss how to steer.

"Oh! but I am not," interrupted Lily Bertram, impetuously, "for now we know the real

Mr. Lennard, and not the false one, which is a comfort, you know. Oh, that wicked Mr. Lennard!" continued she, meditatively, "what a make-believe he has been all these years! I am so sorry that to-morrow is Sunday, and that the law-suit cannot begin at once. But papa says it shall be the first thing he sees about on Monday morning."

It had been a great relief to Mr. Graham that, the next day being Sunday, he was not called upon to face Mr. Bertram so soon after his exposure; but Miss Bertram's information concerning the law-suit filled him with an uneasiness which was at once apparent to her sharp eyes.

"Don't you think papa will win, Mr. Graham?" she asked earnestly.

"My dear Miss Bertram," said he, rising and trying to look quite unmoved, "I know something of English law in these matters, but nothing, or worse than nothing, of French law."

With this he took his leave, for with Miss Bertram's presence, and the restraint it brought, the pleasure of the evening and of Lily Scot's society was gone.

He met Captain Jekyll at the door. At once the Captain took hold of him, and with a knowing nod and a hoarse, confidential whisper, he remarked—

"I say, Graham, the Petherick Gazette has gone over all Saint Aubin declaring she saw and heard it all. 'Did she?' says I—'then she saw and heard with her hat and feather.' Not amiss, sir, not amiss, ha! ha!" and the Captain roared boisterously at his own joke.

"Miss Bertram is within, and the poor child knows nothing," Mr. Graham could not help saying.

"Poor little beggar! she will know it soon enough," said the Captain. "Don't forget about Mrs. Petherick's hat and feather—not amiss, eh?" and so they parted.

"Poor child!" thought Edward Graham—"poor child! how her little pride will have a fall! And her father—how will the wretched man look when we meet again?"

Nothing could be calmer or more unconcerned than Mr. Bertram's manner when he and Mr. Graham did meet on the Monday morning. They exchanged a few words concerning the turret and its progress, then Mr.

Bertram alluded to a vexatious law-suit which that really wrong-headed Mr. Lennard had forced upon him, and then, with a few graceful words, Mr. Bertram took his leave, and Edward Graham breathed with infinite relief: the unpleasant and dreaded interview was over. Mr. Bertram encountered all Saint Aubin with the same calmness with which he had faced his young architect. He ignored any awkward disclosures. When he spoke of Mr. Lennard, he only alluded to his wrong-headedness; and altogether he bore himself with a composure that did credit to his knowledge of human nature. According to the Saint Aubin standard of wealth, Mr. Bertram was a rich man, and money, like charity, covers a multitude of sins all the world over. Saint Aubin liked Mr. Bertram, and did not like Mr. Lennard, so it made the latter its scapegoat, and gave him a convenient accomplice in the deceased Mrs. Bertram. She it was who had wheedled her silly old husband into this guilty fraud, and bribed Mr. Lennard to abet her. Young Mr. Bertram had been the victim of this designing pair. He had learned the truth the very day before his marriage, and rushed out of his mother's presence

in a fit of despair, and with the appropriate exclamation: "Mother, what have you done?" After a fierce struggle between love and honour, love had prevailed, and the unhappy young man had yielded to his fate. Mrs. Greenacre, who kept the Saint Aubin reading-rooms, had first set this pretty little ball of fiction rolling, and it had gathered a good deal of moss on its way. People forgot that Mr. Bertram did not marry until after his mother's death, and that Mr. Lennard did not come and settle in Saint Aubin until the lady had been a year in her grave. Mrs. Scot, who could have set that little matter right, held her peace, and iudeed carried the war against Mr. Lennard with more vigour than anybody else. That gentleman's wrongheadedness, as Mr. Bertram leniently called it, proved far more fatal to himself than to the friend whom he had betrayed and injured. The man who reveals a secret trusted to his honour becomes a common enemy. We all have weak places in our social armour, we all resent the cowardly hand that lays them bare, and exposes the bleeding wound to unkind eyes. So Saint Aubin exonerated Mr. Bertram after a fashion, and black-balled Mr. Lennard unequi-

vocally. The man was shut out of the little world around him. In a day, in an hour, he was cut off from life like any mediæval leper, and left to the solitude of his own silent home.

Matters were going on after their old fashion when Miss Bertram, whom Mr. Graham rarely saw now, broke in upon him in her own impetuous way.

"Oh! Mr. Graham, only think," she cried, clapping her hands in great glee, "papa has won the law-suit. Mr. Lennard must put back the hedge. Is not that glorious?"

"It is indeed," said Mr. Graham, smiling.

"Yes; and only think, Mr. Graham, I saw Mr. Lennard yesterday, and he spoke to me—about you."

A slight change passed across Mr. Graham's face. Mr. Lennard had made no hostile sign since the scene at the Juge de Paix's; but when he had seen Mr. Graham at a distance he had avoided him, or passed him by with a sullen and downcast look.

"What did Mr. Lennard say?" he asked quickly.

Lily took a chair and drew it to the table

near which Mr. Graham was sitting with his papers spread before him, for this conversation took place in one of the lower rooms of the house.

"Well, you see," confidentially pursued Lily, resting her rosy cheeks in the palms of her hands, and looking straight at him, as was her wont, "I just went down to the end of the garden and got to the place where the hedge has been, and there was Mr. Lennard on his side. 'Well, Miss Jones,' said he, 'how are you this morning?' Only think how stupid!" said Lily, laughing merrily, "calling *me* Miss Jones. Well, I did not answer, of course. 'And how is the turret going on?' he continued. 'Tell Mr. Graham I want to speak to him.' And oh! Mr. Graham," said Lily, impressively, "he looked so wicked as he said it—just like our old cat Tom when he is going to spring."

The shrewd and pertinent simile startled Mr. Graham no little, but he tried to smile, and to say carelessly as he rose and pushed his papers away,

"Well, Miss Bertram, I shall give Mr. Lennard an opportunity of springing upon me without loss of time, for I am going there now."

Mr. Graham found Mr. Lennard going up and down a garden walk, with a stick in his hand, and hitting the bushes Tarquin-wise. His reception of the young man was ungracious and ironical.

"Mr. Graham, I believe—I am not sure—yes, it is actually Mr. Graham."

"Mr. Graham would have come earlier had he thought his presence welcome," replied the young man, with some spirit.

"And pray what makes Mr. Graham think that his presence is welcome now?" retorted Mr. Lennard, sourly.

"Miss Bertram told me, sir, that you expressed a wish to speak to me, and——"

"Miss Bertram, *alias* Jones, misunderstood me," answered Mr. Lennard, in his usual dry tone. "Pray how is the turret getting on?"

"I hope it will be finished by the end of June, Mr. Lennard."

"Finished by the end of June," complacently echoed Mr. Lennard, "how delightful! Mr. Graham, I congratulate you, on my word I do. You can say, like that boasting Roman, Exegi something or other!"

He laughed aloud, and his laugh made Mr. Graham feel decidedly uneasy.

"My compliments to Mr. and Miss Jones," resumed Mr. Lennard, waving his hand in polite dismissal of his visitor. "Delighted to think that the turret will be finished by the end of June. Good morning, Mr. Graham, good morning."

Thus dismissed, Mr. Graham went his way, but he thought, as he walked out of the house, and turned towards the old town, "The child is right—that man looks wicked—he is going to spring, and yet I have not wronged him, and what harm can he now do me?"

He had not found an answer to the question as he stood at the door of his inn. He looked up at the two travellers ever journeying above it. He had likened himself to that valiant one pressing on towards the city gates, sure to reach and win the goal of his ambition. Had he been mistaken after all? Was some terrible mischance to step in between him and success? Was he to become that other traveller, footsore and weary, before whom the towers of the fair city are destined to recede for ever?

"It cannot be," thought Mr. Graham, impatiently. "Mr. Lennard is a bad, vindictive man, but even to harm his friend, he cannot

harm me. He cannot make the turret fall, he cannot bid my skill to desert me—and if he should attempt to fail in his part of the contract, have I not got the law to enforce his compliance."

Life is sometimes as a mysterious dialogue, in which man has barely time to question Fate, when the unseen speaker makes reply. Mr. Graham had not yet entered his room, his step was still on the dark staircase that led to it, when one of the servant girls came and put a note in his hand. It was from Mr. Bertram and ran thus:

"My dear Mr. Graham,

"I have just learned the unpleasant news through Mr. Cowper. Of course Mr. Lennard has been only too glad to give you so vexatious a piece of information. Will you kindly call round and give me all the particulars? I shall be at home after two. I am more annoyed than I can well express in words.

"Yours very sincerely,

"Bertram."

Nothing, save his anxiety, could exceed Mr. Graham's perplexity when he read this mys-

terious epistle. That something both unfortunate and important had occurred was plain, and the mere name of Mr. Cowper filled him with the gloomiest apprehensions.

"Of course all is, or will be, wrong, if he has turned up," thought he, with much bitterness. "And I must wait till two to know. It is enough to drive one mad."

At half-past one Mr. Graham was prowling round Mr. Bertram's house. As two struck he entered it with a beating heart.

He found Mr. Bertram waiting for him, or rather reading the newspaper in the dining-room.

"Well, Mr. Graham," he exclaimed, as the young man entered, "what do you think of it? Vexatious, is it not? I suppose you cannot go on with your turret? No, it would not be prudent."

"Why so?" asked Mr. Graham, amazed.

Mr. Bertram stared.

"Think of the risk," said he. "Suppose that it has all to be undone."

It was Edward Graham's turn to stare.

"You cannot mean the turret?" said he.

"My dear sir, what else? You don't mean,"

he added, opening his blue eyes wide—"you don't mean that Mr. Lennard did not tell you?"

"Mr. Lennard told me nothing," replied Edward Graham, setting his teeth, not to break out of all the bonds of patience at this delay.

"Very like him," murmured Mr. Bertram, with contemptuous pity. "Very like him, Mr. Graham, but very disingenuous."

"For God's sake, sir," cried the young architect, unable to bear more, "tell me the worst at once."

"That," said Mr. Bertram, with unmoved composure, "is not in my power. I can only tell you what the worst may be, not what it is. I sent for you, I confess, to receive, not to give information. However, I see you are impatient. Well, Mr. Graham, my daughter, Miss Bertram, inherits this house from her maternal ancestor, Monsieur Grandjean, a worthy man, but a crotchetty one, who made an application to the Minister of State to have it classed among the historical monuments of the province. I threw in my veto, being then the husband of his daughter, and I was told that the application had been withdrawn. I was

deceived. The application was not withdrawn; but you know how matters go on in this unfortunate country—circumlocution office, sir—circumlocution office. The application was only going the round of the bureaus; and it seems, Mr. Graham—it seems that Mr. Lennard, as executor of my father-in-law's will, and administrator of his property—a great mistake of poor Monsieur Grandjean's—it seems that Mr. Lennard knew as much all the time. I am afraid that his motive in withholding such important knowledge from me must have been decidedly sinister. However, now that matters have come to a crisis, he has told all to his nephew, Mr. Cowper, who, though only just arrived from England, kindly called round to warn me. He seemed very much concerned for you, Mr. Graham—very much concerned."

Every moment added to Mr. Graham's secret anxiety.

"May I ask how this matter affects me?" he inquired, trying to look calm.

"Oh! to be sure. I forget that, as a foreigner, you do not know. Well, Mr. Graham, here is just an article in the paper to the purpose. The preservation of historical monuments is

entrusted to a Minister of State, who disposes of a special sum placed every year on the Budget. He is assisted by a commission, consisting of eighteen members named by the Emperor. The duty of this commission is to keep a list of historical monuments, to allot the sum granted by the state, as before-mentioned, for their maintenance, or their reconstruction, if necessary, and to recommend to the minister architects who take charge of them."

The colour left Mr. Graham's cheeks at this last significant clause.

"May I ask what else you know, sir?" said he, as Mr. Bertram laid down the newspaper.

"Well, Mr. Cowper declares that the Inspector-general who superintends works in execution in every department is coming to Saint Aubin. Mr. Lennard has been apprised of the fact, but with his usual wrongheadedness he has chosen to keep it to himself. Of course, he wanted to annoy me. Well, Mr. Graham, he has succeeded—I am annoyed."

Mr. Graham bit his lip. Annoyance was a poor word indeed to express what he felt, and yet he had a presentiment that he did not know the worst.

"May I ask how far the inspector's power extends?" he inquired.

"That is just it," said Mr. Bertram, in a vexed tone—"it is unlimited. The inspector, for instance, may insist on purchasing this house for the State, and I have no power of appeal—I must submit."

"Surely that is too arbitrary!" cried Mr. Graham.

"My dear sir, an historical monument is entirely under the control of the State. Mr. Lennard himself can do nothing for or against you now, unless through underhand means. Ostensibly he is as helpless as he has made me. Moreover, we may consider this house and its appurtenances to have passed from our hands so far as building goes. Not one stone have we now the power to add or to remove."

At first the young man could not speak. He was too much overcome at the terrible prospect before him. He saw it all. It was ruin, ruin in money, for he was pledged to men who would hold him answerable for every farthing he owed them; ruin in honour, for if his work was not finished his just fame was plucked from him at the very moment of fruition; ruin in

love, for if money and reputation were gone, love too must depart from his life and leave it cold and bare. He rose, he went to the window, he looked at the turret, which rose on the blue air in clear and graceful proportions, and on the pinnacle of which still floated the flag that had been set there the day it was roofed; and as he looked a passionate exclamation burst from his lips—

"Good God!" said he, "in what a snare have I fallen!"

A faint tinge of colour rose to Mr. Bertram's pale face.

"Mr. Graham," said he, "remember that for my share in this concern you have the honour of a Bertram."

Mr. Graham could have laughed in the bitterness of his heart; but Mr. Bertram had carried on the deception so long that he really forgot all about his real parentage, till his words woke sudden hope in the young man.

"Let Mr. Lennard take care!" he cried; "if he has set this matter going to annoy you, he is still responsible to me."

"You mean that the loss must fall upon my daughter's estate," said Mr. Bertram, coldly.

"Well, Mr. Graham, that would be just; but Mr. Lennard will not let the world say that he has been instrumental in robbing his ward of her property. Moreover, unless you have a very strictly-worded pledge from him, Mr. Lennard will throw all the blame upon me, say that I had that turret built at my own risk—in short, he will act with his usual wrongheadedness. Now, Mr. Graham, as I am a Bertram," added Mr. Bertram, laying his hand on his heart, and speaking with that patrician air for which Nature had fitted him so well, "I would take on myself this just debt of yours if I had the means; but beyond the sum for which I am pledged to you I cannot go."

"Then I am a ruined man," said Mr. Graham, bitterly.

"Not so," replied Mr. Bertram, laying his white hand on the young man's shoulder and smiling down at him with his handsome blue eyes. "Perhaps, on the contrary, your fortune is made. The inspector may approve all you have done, and give you other work of the same kind in the province——"

"I am a foreigner," interrupted Edward Graham, with some scorn. "Will a Govern-

ment official employ an English architect when there are clever Frenchmen to be had by the dozen?"

"At all events, Mr. Graham," continued Mr. Bertram, still bent on soothing the exasperated young man, "he may leave well alone, he may not take this work to give it to another. His visit, Mr. Graham, need not be one of condemnation."

"And if he should condemn, if he should take this work and give it to another man, what becomes of me?" asked Mr. Graham, looking him full in the face.

"Ah! to be sure—that would be most unfortunate," replied Mr. Bertram, evasively; "but we will hope for better things, Mr. Graham, we will hope for better things—only perhaps it would be well not to hurry on matters until the inspector has been. Yes, it would be well."

There was no more to say. Mr. Graham took his leave, but he had scarcely reached the court when he turned back to put a question to Mr. Bertram, which, in the bitterness of his troubled thoughts, he had forgotten. When would the inspector come? But Mr. Bertram had already

left the room where the conversation had taken place, and in his stead Mr. Graham found Lily Bertram standing by the table, with the newspaper in her hand. She turned round as he entered, and he saw that her face was bathed in tears.

"Oh! Mr. Graham," she began; then she broke down and shook with grief.

"Oh! Mr. Graham," she said again, shaking back her hair and her tears too from her flushed face, "why am I not twenty-one? You should not lose a sou by me. Oh! Mr. Graham, it will break my heart!"

"Excuse me," said he, in a constrained tone, "I do not understand."

"You do," rudely interrupted Lily, "but you will not understand, just as you would not see me, though I was sitting there all the time behind that desk looking at you—you would not see me, Mr. Graham, and it is very ill-natured of you. I said so only this morning to Lily Scot." Lily Bertram was in one of those moments of excitement when from the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh. "But it is not because you are so unkind, and will snub me, that I am not sorry to be the cause of such

trouble to you," continued Lily, looking at him with bright, tearful eyes. "Oh! Mr. Graham, when I am twenty-one I will pay you every sou that you may lose now—every sou. And as to the work of the other architect, if they have one, I will get it all pulled down!" cried Lily.

Nothing could be more unlike Mr. Bertram's plausible speech than his daughter's impassioned declaration. Her whole heart was in what she said, and unkind as she thought him, Mr. Graham was touched with the warmth of the child. He looked at her with grateful eyes, and taking her hand, he shook it cordially.

"Thank you, my good little Lily," said he. "I like that in you—you are a true one, every inch of you. What you feel you say, and what you say you would abide by—if you could," he added, with a sigh.

"But I can when I am twenty-one," cried Lily, flushed all over with a glow of pleasure and emotion.

"Ah! but where shall I be then?" ruefully said Mr. Graham.

"Oh! how I do hate Mr. Lennard!" said Lily, clenching her hands. "I have no patience

with Lily Scot, who will not let me say a word against him."

"Miss Scot does not know this last trait," said Edward Graham, with a sigh.

"Yes, she does," answered indiscreet Lily. "Mr. Cowper told her, and she told me, and she cried, and said she saw now it was all over."

Sudden paleness overspread Mr. Graham's face as he heard that his sentence had been spoken by the lips he loved.

"And I will hate Mr. Lennard, who has done it all," continued Lily. "Sister Martha may scold—I will hate him."

"Good-bye," hurriedly said Mr. Graham, turning away. His heart was full, and he could bear no more.

CHAPTER VII.

SUSPENSE was not added to the anxieties of Edward Graham's lot. Mr. Lennard had hurled his thunderbolt with scarce an hour's warning. As the young architect left Mr. Bertram's house, and walked down the street, he was aware of a *débonnair*-looking young man lounging in the sunshine, and coming towards him at an easy pace. It was impossible to turn back, yet Edward Graham would have given something to avoid meeting Richard Cowper just then. Mr. Cowper, however, appeared, as usual, delighted to encounter his old friend.

"My dear Graham," said he, with smiling face and outstretched hand, "so glad to see you —went to the City of Jerusalem, and found two travellers over the doorway, but not the traveller I wanted. If you are going there

now, I shall walk down with you—come, now, don't look so glum," he good-naturedly added, reading Edward Graham's dark and troubled face with a smiling blue eye. "That matter of the inspector sticks in your throat. My dear fellow, it is the fortune of war. In life we must take and give. Well, well, you must not look so prodigiously offended, because I mean no sort of harm. I have seen your turret, man, and think it splendid, and the inspector must be an ass if he does not think so too. By the way, why don't you wait for him? You will scarcely have time to come back before he will have visited Mr. Bertram's house."

Edward Graham, who had been walking on, stood still in the street, and spoke for the first time.

"Is the inspector actually in Saint Aubin?" he asked.

"He is with my uncle just now, I believe. I went down to tell you. They are going to see Mr. Bertram's house, and you ought to be present."

"I ought indeed," answered the young man, turning back. "I beg your pardon," he added, after a few seconds, and speaking with evident

effort—"I ought to thank you for the trouble you are taking in my behalf, but my mind is engrossed by this matter——"

"Of course, of course," airily interrupted Mr. Cowper; "but don't take it to heart. The inspector is a thorough gentleman, and too good a judge, I am sure, to behave unhandsomely. Why, I declare," he added, as they entered Mr. Bertram's house together, "they are there already. Most fortunate that I met you, ain't it?"

Edward Graham did not answer him. His heart had leaped into his mouth, his dark Italian eyes were devouring the looks, the aspect, the bearing of the arbiter of his fate. He saw standing by Mr. Lennard's side—for Mr. Lennard was there too, facing his enemy on his own ground—he saw a pale, slight little man of cool, but gentlemanlike aspect, who wore glasses, and listened with courteous but formal attention to the explanations Mr. Bertram was giving. He at once joined the group, and Mr. Bertram promptly introduced him.

"Monsieur Graham, the architect."

The inspector bowed.

"A most interesting dwelling," he said—

"decidedly interesting and of great historical value, as showing us what a private house of small size was three hundred years ago. Pity this fine carving is so much defaced. Have you been attempting to restore it?" he added, turning rather sharply to Edward Graham.

"I have not," answered the young man. "The new turret was my only concern."

"Ah! the new turret." The inspector raised his glasses to that turret which had so long been Edward Graham's great hope, and he looked at it, alas! very coldly. "Why is it so bare?" he asked, with evident disapprobation. "Why does it not correspond in ornament as well as in shape and proportion with the old one?"

"The outlay would have been enormous," answered Edward Graham, modestly.

The inspector nodded, as much as to say, "Well, it would indeed."

"Nevertheless," he added aloud, "that meagre ornament looks incongruous near that rich carving."

Edward Graham bit his lip, and Mr. Lennard laughed, and Mr. Bertram remarked that old and new work rarely went well together.

"I beg your pardon, sir," retorted the inspector, rather sharply, "old work goes very well with new work when this is good. I have just had the town-hall of Rennevaux restored by my best architect, and there is nothing finer in all France."

Mr. Bertram, who was not accustomed to such flat contradiction, raised his eyebrows in dignified surprise, and drew himself up rather haughtily. The inspector continued in a clear, positive, and dogmatic tone:

"This turret cannot remain as it is—it disfigures the rest of the edifice. There must be carving upon it, and carving of the finest quality, similar, in short, to that of Rennevaux. I should like to visit it within, if you please."

Mr. Bertram led the way, and they all entered the unfinished turret. It was still in the roughest state. The inspector said not one word, but nodded several times, and shook his head, as if by no means satisfied with what he saw. When the turret was visited, he proceeded to the other parts of the house, but this time Edward Graham remained behind to brood over his bitter disappointment. He had hoped

that a man of experience, taste, and judgment would say at least one kind word, and not one such had fallen from the inspector's lips. His work was going to be taken from him, his cherished task was to be confided to older and more experienced hands, and he was not to have even the poor meed of a little praise. It was hard. He had entered Mr. Bertram's neglected garden. It lay before him in all the freshness and promise of Spring—a green spot full of weeds, but also full of beauty. Many a time had he brought his anxious thoughts there, and many a time, too, his ambitious hopes and visions, and now that all was ending in a dull and heavy cloud, he brought to it his bitter trouble. "They will take that poor turret from me," thought he. "Of course if they take it, I cannot be actually out of pocket, but good-bye to all I had hoped for—ay, good-bye for ever!"

"Mr. Graham!" said Lily Bertram's light voice behind him. He turned round and saw her coming towards him, all out of breath. "Oh! Mr. Graham, do come!" she said. "Oh! do come—papa wants you. Oh! Mr. Graham, they are going to pull down the turret!"

"What?"

"Yes," said Lily, looking scared, "the inspector said so, and papa is so angry; he bade me look for you. Oh, do come!"

Such a blow as this Mr. Graham had not anticipated, but he would not let it crush him yet. With set teeth and flaming eyes, he walked back towards the house at strides so rapid that little Lily had to run to keep up with him. Black and fierce as thunder, the young man broke into Mr. Bertram's presence, looking round for the inspector, as if he would have annihilated him. All his hot Italian blood was on fire, ready to break forth through the acquired coldness of his habits and early rearing. But Mr. Bertram was alone, though, as Lily had said, in a rage.

"Mr. Graham!" he exclaimed, as the young man entered the room, "that Mr. Lennard's wrongheadedness has gone beyond all bounds; he will certainly drive me to extremities. It must be he who has persuaded that absurd inspector that the turret compromises the solidity of the whole edifice. It is atrocious—atrocious, Mr. Graham—to talk of having it demolished, now that it is nearly completed; but that is

Mr. Lennard's revenge for his defeat in the matter of the hedge."

"Where is the inspector?" asked Edward Graham, trying to speak very calmly.

"He went away with Mr. Lennard; but of course you——"

He said no more. Edward Graham was already out of the room, almost out of the house, borne away by that whirlwind of passion which seizes some men in the crisis of their lives, and which their previous coldness makes all the more terrible to see.

"Oh! papa," cried Lily, whose teeth chattered with fear, "do you think Mr. Graham will kill the inspector?"

"I hope not," said Mr. Bertram; but he, too, was alarmed at the young man's looks.

Edward Graham was more composed when he was shown into Mr. Lennard's presence, and asked to see the inspector; but though he spoke in measured tones, there was a dangerous light in his eye which did not escape Mr. Bertram's enemy.

"The inspector has gone to look at the town-hall," he said cheerfully. "Won't you sit down, Mr. Graham?"

"No, thank you," and the young architect was turning to the door, when he suddenly changed his mind, and came back to the spot where Mr. Lennard stood. His blood had had time to cool, his wrath to change its object, and also to sink deeper, and become more settled in its purpose; but before he gave it vent, he would make a last passionate appeal to the man before him.

"Mr. Lennard," he said, "can you tell me what the inspector said after I was gone?"

"Well, it is a pity you did go, Mr. Graham—quite a pity; you could perhaps have answered that gentleman's objections. You should have stayed, Mr. Graham."

"Mr. Lennard, I ask you what he said," was the stern rejoinder.

"And do I understand these technicalities?" exclaimed Mr. Lennard testily. "Don't ask me the why and the wherefore; all I know is, he said the turret must be pulled down because otherwise it would fall and ruin the rest of the building."

"He said that?"

"He did; but look here, Mr. Graham, don't let that cut you up. Your builder is answer-

able to you—put it all on him." And Mr. Lennard winked, and laid his finger to his nose with his dry laugh.

"And you think I am such a base, dishonourable villain as to try and save myself at the cost of an innocent man—you think I will do another the wrong which, to your eternal shame and disgrace, you are attempting to do me! Mr. Lennard," he cried, the veins in his forehead starting, "I would die a beggar before I would betray my honour as you are betraying yours in this matter."

"Suppose, Mr. Graham, you kept a civil tongue in your head!" said Mr. Lennard, looking bilious.

"Civility and your actions cannot go together, Mr. Lennard," answered the young man, with a bitter laugh. "You have sacrificed me, an innocent man, to your paltry revenge, and if my turret falls, it is for the sake of that miserable hedge. You may ruin me, I believe you will, for I am a foreigner here, and helpless in the hands of the strong, but remember," he added, lifting up a warning forefinger—"remember that if your grey hairs save you from some of the consequences of evil-doing, they only make

deeper and more terrible the gulf which already divides you from all honest men in this place."

He had meant to appeal to any lingering sense of justice which might remain in Mr. Lennard's heart, but wrath and passion had proved too strong, and with this bitter denunciation he left him.

Mr. Lennard stood speechless for one minute, then suddenly rallying, he called out in a voice of thunder,

"Louis, imbecile, idiot, come here!"

A thin weazel-faced servant-man answered these various appellations, and appeared at the door of the dining-room with a broom in his hand.

"You see that fellow going off there!" cried Mr. Lennard, pointing through the open window to Mr. Graham's receding form. "Well, the next time he comes to this house you will please to kick him out."

Louis heard his master with perfect equanimity, being indeed accustomed to such storms of passion, but he mildly objected:

"Will Monsieur please to tell me how I am to kick out Monsieur Gram? Because," continued

Louis, with great composure, "I do not think Monsieur Gram would let me do it."

"You are an idiot!" angrily said Mr. Lennard.

"That is why I want to be instructed by Monsieur," retorted Louis, whose revenge for his master's contumely was ever taken out in exasperating coolness.

But Monsieur only answered, savagely:

"If that man ever walks in here again, you walk out the next moment. Do you hear?"

Louis had heard, and he said so. But the behest was unneeded. Never more did Mr. Graham cross the threshold of the man who had so cruelly and wantonly wronged him.

The inspector had left the town-hall when Edward Graham reached it. He was gone to the brown house. Off to the brown house rushed the young man; but when he got there he only found the court, the house with the trefoils, and the brown house itself, all looking tranquil, ancient, and half-asleep in the May sun. There had been some mistake. The inspector had never been there. The young man stood irresolute for a moment, then, having had time to cool, he considered that a public building, or the

open street, was not the place to hear the inspector's verdict. He resolved to find out at what hotel he stopped, to get an interview with him, and fight his hard battle as well as he could. The inspector was staying nominally at the Lion d'or, but in reality he was not to be found there, being engaged with all the historical monuments of Saint Aubin. The whole of that afternoon Edward Graham followed him in vain. He could never succeed in overtaking him. He had sent a pressing message to Monsieur Merle to come at once, but the builder was not at home; he was ten leagues off, said his wife, and could not be at Saint Aubin before the next morning. This was unfortunate. And Mr. Graham had no one to consult, no one who could advise him in this cruel emergency. He thought of Lily Scot, indeed, whose prudence and discretion he had entire faith in, but unwilling to discuss this matter in the presence of Mrs. Scot and her daughters, he wrote a few lines to his betrothed, asking her to let him speak to her alone that evening. The day was already well worn, and having confided the note to Sarah Webster, he waited for the appointed hour as patiently as he could. He did

not feel sanguine. He looked forward to the worst. The inspector had either been prejudiced against him, or he wanted to make a job for a friend out of Mr. Bertram's house, or he was in good faith, but that Edward Graham was loath to admit. He felt sure of the solidity of the building—so sure that only the grossest ignorance, he was certain, could explain this terrible mistake. And yet that ignorance in which he did not believe was his only chance. If he could convince the Inspector that he was mistaken, he, Edward Graham, was saved; if he could not, he was ruined.

Mrs. Scot, who knew nothing, Lily having remained discreetly silent, and prevented Miss Bertram from giving Louisa and Jane information—Mrs. Scot, we say, was taking her usual nap when Sarah Webster admitted Edward Graham that evening, and said significantly,

"Miss Lily's in the garden, sir."

Lily was in the garden and alone. The air was chill; she had tied her handkerchief on her head, and Edward Graham saw that she was pale and looked troubled. At once his courage rose, and he cheered her.

"My darling," said he, passing her slender

arm within his own strong one, "you must not be cast down. I shall prevail over them all, depend upon it."

A sigh was Lily's answer. She tried to smile, but could not. For many days she had been striving in vain against the conviction that her life was to be one of disappointment, but now that conviction was very strong. As that grey garden in the evening light of a cloudy and starless sky, so seemed her young life darkened in its early promise, but with no hope of sunshine for the morrow.

"You must not be depressed, my dear girl," said Edward Graham, still bent on being hopeful. "I have sent for Merle, I shall call with him to-morrow on the inspector, and if reason can convince a man, he shall be convinced."

Lily raised her gentle dark eyes to his with a very wistful look.

"My dear Edward," she said sadly, "the inspector is gone."

Then indeed the blow fell on the young architect, and he felt that he had been tried unheard, and sentenced without hope of appeal. He felt it, yet rebelled against the conviction.

"It is impossible!" he said passionately.

Then, in a low tone, drawing his arm from Lily's, as if thus acknowledging that he could no longer be her stay against sorrow, he added with a groan, "Lily, I am a ruined man!"

She laid her two hands on his arm, and looked tenderly up in his face.

"Do not give way," she said soothingly. "It is a cruel blow, but it is not ruin. Mr. Bertram says that since there is a defect in the building, the loss must fall on the builder who——"

"On the builder!" interrupted Edward Graham, almost angrily; "and do you think, Lily, I would let an innocent man suffer for my misfortune? A defect in the building! There is none. That inspector is ignorant or dishonest, or he would not dare to say so."

"But it must be taken down," said Lily, with her troubled look. "You cannot bear all the loss."

He was silent a while. It was almost more than he could bear to hear her speak so of his work. He wanted the passionate indignation of Miss Bertram, not that sad, grave view of his loss or gain, the only one which Lily Scot seemed able to take. He wronged her in the bitterness

of his heart. She felt for his humbled pride and his disappointed ambition, as well as for his falling fortunes.

"Mr. Bertram will surely not shrink from his responsibility," he said at last.

"Who knows?" sadly answered Lily. "If he believes that there is a fault in the building, he may not think himself bound to you. Besides, his means are limited. He has only an annuity, which dies with him. Lily Bertram is rich, but Lily Bertram's money is in Mr. Lennard's hands."

"Lily, Lily," said her lover, with a sort of despair, "have you no comfort to give me?"

"Oh, that I had—that I had!" she answered, the tears rushing to her eyes; "but it is my misfortune, not my fault, that I see things too much as they are, not as I could wish them to be."

Mr. Graham walked up and down the path, his hands clenched, his lips compressed, his blood boiling with indignation, his heart overflowing with sorrow. Never in all his life had his manliness found it harder to repress the manifestation of grief than in that sad hour. He could have stormed and cried like a boy at

the injustice and hardship of his lot. Spite the premature gravity of his aspect, the troubles of life were new to him. Seriousness is not experience, and that stern teacher had hitherto passed him by, and poured her lessons into other ears than his. He rebelled—with all his heart he rebelled against her, and would have flung back, if he could, a defiance in her face. It was so unjust, so hard, so unmerited. Why should he have to suffer for Mr. Lennard's revenge, for the inspector's folly or dishonesty—why indeed? And yet he felt even then that illusion was useless and foolish, that his doom was decreed, and submission his only lot.

"I will make an effort," he said, turning to Lily, "but I have no hope. Good night, my dear girl; you must excuse me to Mrs. Scot—I must go home and write a letter."

Lily was too much depressed to reply. She walked by his side till they reached the end of the garden, and when there he stood still, and taking her in his arms, he kissed her, and uttered a sad good night. Tears were her only answer. It was all over, she felt it then; the rest was but the bitter lingering over what was the inevitable end.

Swiftly and almost angrily Mr. Graham walked home in the cloudy light of the Spring evening. He had a letter to write; he would write it. It might avail nothing, but those men in office should know something of his mind—he would not fall without making a manful effort to win the day; besides, he would appeal to the law—he would, though he should thereby only sink the deeper. He would spend his last shilling—he would——

"Monsieur Merle is waiting for Monsieur," said a maid whom he met on the threshold of the Cité de Jérusalem, and who here interrupted his bitter reverie.

"Thank heaven!" said Edward Graham, springing up the dark stairs. "He will help me to fight it out—he is a man."

Edward Graham found the builder waiting for him in his room. As he saw him sitting there, he remembered with a pang how he had seen him for the first time in that very room, in that very chair, eight months before, sitting thus waiting for him, and with his thin hair stirred by the night air coming in through the open window. The remembrance of that evening, when he stood unconscious on the brink of

his fate, suddenly sobered the young man.

"Well, Monsieur Merle," he said quietly, "I see you got my message."

Monsieur Merle shook his head.

"I did not get your message, Monsieur," said he, giving him a doubtful look, and coughing as he moved on his chair, "but Maître Louis Renaud, the carpenter, came down my way, and he told me an inspector had come to Saint Aubin, and that—it seems like a dream—that he objected to the turret, and was going to get it pulled down."

"He does not find it steady," answered Edward Graham, laconically, and sitting down as he spoke. "What do you say to that, Monsieur Merle?" and he laughed, and looked at his visitor with a scorn that was not meant for him.

The man's simple and honest face flushed to the roots of his thin hair. His blue eyes lit, and he struck a blow on the table by his side.

"Maître Louis Renaud said it," he cried, "and I could not believe it, and it is false, Monsieur—as I am a man it is false. I followed out your instructions to the letter, Monsieur. I put it to you, did I not?"

"You did," answered Edward Graham, holding out his hand to him across the table. "As I am a man, the blame, if blame there be, is mine. And, Monsieur Merle," he added, after a brief pause, "no matter how all this ends, I will never put the blame on you."

"I knew it," said Monsieur Merle, excitedly. "I knew you were brave," he added, using the word in its old provincial meaning, of honesty. "I said so to Maître Louis Renaud, when he came to me in such a fright. But, Monsieur Gram," continued the builder, "is it possible that they will do such an abominable thing as to pull down that turret?"

"How do I know?—how can I tell?" replied Edward Graham, with some bitterness. "I am a foreigner, you are a native, and you and not I should know what there is to fear."

"I never had such a case," replied Monsieur Merle, with a perplexed look, "but—but people in power do not care much for people's pockets. Can you do nothing, Monsieur Gram? Have you no friends to help you?"

"I have one strong enemy against me, and my good right for me, and that is how I stand, Monsieur Merle."

The builder's face fell; then, with a heavy sigh, he asked Monsieur to tell him all that had taken place. There is a bitter pleasure in the recapitulation of our woes, and Edward Graham's narrative was prolix enough. Monsieur Merle heard him with a troubled look.

"I am afraid, Monsieur Gram," he said, when the young architect was silent—"I am afraid. The inspector must be a fool or a rogue, and I had almost rather he were a rogue than a fool, for you can convince a rogue, but a fool never, never, Monsieur Gram. And I think, I do, that it is that Laurent's doing. He has always said the turret was too bare. Has he been hoping for a job? I must pay him all the same, for there is a contract, and he knows it, and if he has no conscience I have one, and also a good name, to which I hold, and he knows it."

Edward Graham bent his shrewd, keen look on the man's troubled countenance.

"Let us look the worst in the face," said he, "let us say that the inspector's decree is passed, that the turret must fall—what then?"

The builder rose to his feet with an ashy face.

"Monsieur," said he, with a scared look, "I

have gone into this in good faith, the bread of my children is in it, my honour is in it. The turret was to be finished by the thirtieth of June, and by the first of July I have heavy bills, fifty thousand francs and more, to pay."

"And by the first of July I shall owe you forty thousand francs, that is your meaning, is it not, Monsieur Merle?"

"Monsieur Gram, you know what our bargain was. I am not and do not wish to be a harsh creditor, but you say yourself that I am not to blame, and you know what our bargain was."

"I do," answered Edward Graham, in a steady voice; "and let what may come to pass, you shall not lose, Monsieur Merle."

The builder looked at him, he read truth and honesty in his face, he breathed a deep, relieved sigh, and uttered a low but earnest, "Thank God!" which showed how deep and strong his fear had been.

And so, much relieved, the builder left Edward Graham, and as the young man listened to his retreating step, he felt strangely forsaken and alone. No hopeful illusions beguiled the bitterness of that hour. The trap into which

he had fallen was all the clearer for having been hidden so long. The same cruel hand which had bided its revenge with Mr. Bertram had also known how to bide its time with Mr. Graham's turret. The hatred was not for him, but he was none the less the victim of it, and so he looked his future in the face sadly, but, as he said to himself, with some pride, like a man

CHAPTER VIII.

THE last act of the dramas of real life is not always like that of a drama played out on the stage. It does not follow those laws of ever-culminating interest which prevail in man's conception of man's misfortunes. The real tragedy often opens instead of ending with the catastrophe; and its termination is apt to be flat and dull. There certainly was no comparison between the severity of the blow which had fallen so suddenly on Edward Graham, and the long, weary unfolding of the trouble which now embittered his life.

His first act was to bid Monsieur Merle dismiss the workmen. They went their way; the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold became silent once more, and the young architect brooded over his wrongs in the Cité de Jéru-

salem. His next step was to write to the inspector, and make a long, earnest, and passionate appeal for justice; and third, and alas! most trying task, he faced Saint Aubin. To his indignation he found that this little world, which he had not injured, but to which he had not perhaps paid sufficient homage, was unanimous in condemnation. If Saint Aubin had been builder, architect, mason, carpenter, it could not have been surer than it was that Mr. Graham and his turret were both all wrong.

Monsieur Duhamel and Monsieur Gentil, who agreed about nothing else, kindly agreed in pooh-poohing Edward Graham and his ill-fated turret. Mr. Lennard eagerly took up the tale. "The man never was an architect," he said, contemptuously; and shut out of society though he was, he could utter the words in open and public places, where they found many an echo. So it was agreed that Mr. Graham had never been an architect, that he had all but ruined Mr. Bertram's beautiful house, and that it was a mercy the inspector had come in time to save that interesting relic of antiquity from destruction. And of this Mr. Graham heard enough to feel a resentment all the deeper that he scorned to show it.

Several days had passed thus when, as he was walking up the street on his way to Mr. Bertram's, Edward Graham met Mrs. Petherick coming out of Mrs. Scot's door.

"Oh! Mr. Graham," she cried, "I am in such a rage! I have just been and told Mrs. Scot. I should have died, I think, if I had not told her. She was very angry, of course, though not half so much as I am; but then she is such a sweet-tempered woman; and you always were an immense favourite of mine, Mr. Graham," added Mrs. Petherick, nodding at the young architect, and seeming unmindful of the stern gravity of his aspect. "I daresay that is why the odious Captain is so bitter against you. And now what do you think he called your beautiful turret not an hour ago in the reading-room?—he called it the tower of Pisa, Mr. Graham. So absurd, you know, because your turret is beautifully straight. The tower of Pisa! Oh! I am so angry!"

"I am very much obliged to you," said Edward Graham, grimly; "and especially for telling Mrs. Scot. Good morning, Mrs. Petherick." And with his haughtiest bow he left her.

"The tower of Pisa!" thought he, burning

with resentment, not at Captain Jekyll's poor insolence, but at all that had caused it. He pushed open Mr. Bertram's gate and entered the court of Mr. Bertram's house, and looked up, oh! how bitterly, at the unfinished turret before him. Old Marie's white cap appeared at a ground-floor window, then vanished, then after a while the woman came out to him, and said doubtfully,

"Monsieur Bertram is going out, but he will be happy to see Monsieur for a few minutes."

"Of course he is going out," thought Edward Graham. "He was in the country all these days, and now he is going out."

Mr. Bertram was alone. He was standing, in silent protest, against a long visit; and indeed the moment that Edward Graham entered the dining-room, and that his eyes met Mr. Bertram's, the young man felt that that calm, handsome face before him was neither open nor friendly.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Graham," said Mr. Bertram, with a cold shake of the hand. "I hope you bring good news of that vexatious business. It is most vexatious," he added, shaking his head solemnly. "I am more concerned than I can say."

"I have just got a letter from the inspector," answered Mr. Graham.

"Ah! indeed; and what does he say?"

"That the turret cannot remain."

"Very unfortunate," said Mr. Bertram, who did not look much surprised. "Such heavy loss," he murmured, rubbing his smooth chin—Mr. Bertram wore no beard.

"This is not the speech of a man who is going to pay me," thought Edward Graham.

"It is such heavy loss," resumed Mr. Bertram; "but of course," he remarked, meditatively, "Merle, the builder, will make the most of the stone and all that."

Mr. Graham was silent, but though he did not know it, he looked very sternly at Mr. Bertram, who continued, with undisturbed equanimity:

"If sympathy for such a misfortune can lighten your trouble, Mr. Graham, you have mine—yes," he added, in the emphatic tone of a man who is making a liberal donation—"you have mine."

Edward Graham felt that he must come to the point.

"Mr. Bertram," said he, "when I began this

work at your wish, we entered into an agreement by which you bound yourself to pay me the sum of thirty thousand francs——"

"Mr. Graham," interrupted Mr. Bertram, with an alarmed start, "you cannot be serious —you cannot mean that *I* am to be the sufferer in this unfortunate matter?"

"I mean, sir, that ten days ago you assured me, on the honour of a Bertram——"

"Of course I did," again interrupted Mr. Bertram, "but I never contemplated then that the turret was actually to be destroyed, pulled down, levelled to the ground. Mr. Graham," said he, laying his white hand on the young man's arm, and looking down at him with his serene blue eyes, "I put it to you—can I, can any man be expected to pay for unsound work?"

"Do you believe it to be unsound?" asked Edward Graham, whose dark eyes burned with ill-repressed resentment.

"I must believe it," calmly answered Mr. Bertram. "I must believe what competent judges have declared to be true."

"It is not!" said the young man angrily— "the work is not unsound work, but work good and true."

"Mr. Graham, allow me; these are mere words. Since you will dwell on this painful theme, not of my own seeking, you will allow, let me remind you, that you have not communicated to me the inspector's letter."

"And you think I am afraid to do so?" indignantly answered Mr. Graham, and he threw, rather than he put, the letter on the table which divided him from Mr. Bertram.

The inspector's letter, which Mr. Bertram read aloud in a clear, even voice, ran thus:—

"MONSIEUR,

"I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, dated the 17th ultimo. Allow me to inform you that you labour under a misconception. Your employers, knowing that the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold was under the control of the State, may or may not, according to the terms of the agreement, be answerable to you for the consequences of such a state of things. But there are matters into which the commission cannot possibly enter. With regard to the solidity of the turret, and the opinions I expressed upon its incongruous appearance, I simply persist in what I have already said; but at the same time

I beg to decline all argument upon the subject, being answerable to the commission only for those opinions. I beg, Monsieur, that you will accept the assurance of my distinguished consideration."

Then followed the official signature, which was officially illegible.

"Well, sir," said Mr. Bertram, putting down the letter, and looking at Mr. Graham in calm rebuke, "this is plain enough. Your unfortunate turret is not solid. I am sorry for you, but allow me to ask what *I* have to do with architectural mistakes?"

He stood before Mr. Graham with his hand on his heart, calm, dignified—a Bertram from head to foot. Mr. Graham, too, stood, and he confronted Mr. Bertram with a contempt as calm as that gentleman's dignity.

"The inspector's assertions are those of one man," said he; "the turret is there—let it be tested by experts. I am willing to abide by their opinion. Moreover, sir, there is a passage in that letter which you ignore: that Mr. Lennard and you, knowing this house to be under the control of the State, are answerable to me for the loss with which I am threatened."

"If this be a threat," said Mr. Bertram, with an indignant laugh, "I put it by, sir, so," and he waved his white hand, and flashed his diamond ring at Edward Graham. "You may try the law, if you please, but I warn you that it will go against you. I am not answerable for facts of which I was ignorant, nor responsible for the payment of work that is flagrantly unsound."

Edward Graham scorned to argue. Whichever way Mr. Bertram steered meant ruin for him; then what mattered a little money, more or less, when all must go? "I must outlive it either way," thought he; "let me, then, be a man, and bear my ill-fortune with a man's pride."

"Mr. Bertram," said he, drawing himself up to his full height, "I am the victim of foul injustice, and you know it; my work is sound work and true, and you know it—I leave you to your conscience."

"Sir," cried Mr. Bertram, colouring a little, and starting with a mixture of confusion and anger, "what do you mean?"

"What I say."

"If you mean that you will appeal to the law——"

"I leave you to your conscience," again said Mr. Graham, "and to that higher law which is as far above that of this world as heaven is above earth. Good morning, Mr. Bertram."

He walked out of the house, more indignant than disheartened, and receiving one of those early lessons on the reliance which inexperienced men must place on fair words.

In the same house where the Juge de Paix sat in his dark room, Monsieur Lavis, the *avoué*, had set up his *étude*, or rather the great-grandfather of Monsieur Lavis had set it up three generations ago. Monsieur Lavis was a lawyer—a rich one, a keen one, and an old one. He was the ablest man of his profession in Saint Aubin, and to him Edward Graham had applied for advice in the very beginning of his present trouble. He had explained his case candidly and clearly, but with all the inevitable prolixity of a man who has got a wrong. Little, bald-headed Monsieur Lavis had not much to do just then, and he had listened patiently, with his head thrown back, his mouth open, and his eyes half shut. When Edward Graham's account of all that had passed was ended, the young man could not help adding, a little

impatiently—"I do not know if I have made myself understood."

"Perfectly," said Monsieur Lavis. "I always shut my eyes to concentrate thought. Well, my young friend, all I have to say is this: Write to the inspector, and when you receive his answer, bring it to me."

Edward Graham had written, and when the answer had come, he had taken it to Monsieur Lavis.

"Ah! so," said Monsieur Lavis, looking rapidly over it—"well, suppose you follow the advice of that good gentleman with the unreadable name, apply to Messieurs Bertram and Lennard, and ask them to pay you."

"Mr. Bertram I will see on that matter—with Mr. Lennard I will have no personal dealings," was the young man's indignant answer.

"Ah!" said Monsieur Lavis, placably—"well, when you have seen Monsieur Bertram, you can come and tell me what he says."

What Mr. Bertram said we know, and now we can follow Edward Graham up the dark stairs of the old house, we can ring with him at the dingy door of the *étude*, and with him, too, we can enter the presence of Monsieur Lavis.

The *avoué* looked up from his desk, waved his visitor to a chair, and waited. At once Edward Graham gave him a clear and rapid account of his interview with Mr. Bertram.

"Well," said Monsieur Lavis, in a low, confidential tone, "Monsieur Bertram, with such a loophole as that of want of solidity in the turret, could scarcely act otherwise. It really was not to be expected," he complacently added, and evidently viewing the case from a legal and professional point of view.

Mr. Graham bit his lip, but it was quietly enough that he remarked:

"Pray, then, how am I to deal with Messrs. Bertram and Lennard?"

"If I understood you rightly the other day," said Monsieur Lavis, "your first wish was to get clear of Monsieur Merle, the builder."

"Just so."

"Well, then, settle with him—*a l'aimable*, of course. He has the name of an honest man. I daresay he will allow you as much for your turret as it is worth. When you have ascertained what your real loss is, you can make another attempt with Messieurs Bertram and Lennard——"

"Never!" interrupted the young man,—"never will I appeal to either, unless through the law."

"Oh!" quietly said Monsieur Lavis, "the law! Well, then, you can try the law, as you say."

"But how—but when, and with what result?" asked Edward Graham, impetuously.

"My dear Monsieur, how do I know?" was the composed answer. "There will be the usual delays, of course; but of course, too, much will depend upon the experts who will be appointed to look into the turret, and——"

"I am not afraid," cried Edward Graham, vehemently. "I would stake a fortune—I would stake my life upon its soundness!"

"Of course you would," placably said Monsieur Lavis; "but unfortunately your fate lies in the hands of men who may differ from you in these matters. Now suppose, for instance, that Messieurs Gentil and Duhamel were the experts, they would go against you; and as it seems the turret must be destroyed *quand même,* time will not show who is right and who is wrong in this matter, and——"

Edward Graham started to his feet with a

vehemence that nearly threw down his chair.

"Is there, then, no law, no justice?" he cried, the veins in his forehead swelling, and his dark eyes flashing fire. "Am I to be the victim of a quarrel with which I had nothing to do—of that base revenge, which would ruin one man that another may be hurt—of that mean avarice which would rob labour of its wages? Am I to be defrauded in honour and in substance because of the ignorance of government officials, and the envy of rival practitioners? Are these shores as cruel and as savage to the stranger as they were when they reared false beacons, and lived upon the foul plunder of the sea?"

He spoke with the passionate and unconscious eloquence that springs from the sense of a great wrong; he spoke, too, with that eloquence of look, voice, and manner, which seems inherent to some races, and which, though he so rarely showed it, was the gift of his Italian blood. "That young man has missed his vocation," thought the lawyer, admiringly; "he was meant for the bar; he has the look, the action, the voice, the passion—good, very good!"

"Well?" impatiently said Edward Graham.

"Well," composedly said Monsieur Lavis,

"allow me a plain question. Law-suits are doubtful matters—I suppose you know that. How much are you willing to risk on this law-suit?"

The question fell like ice on a raging flame. How much would he risk? That was to say, how much of his little all would there be left for him to risk when he had settled with Monsieur Merle?

"Do you mean to say," he retorted, "that I am not sure to win?"

Monsieur Lavis stared.

"Sure to win!" he echoed—"have I not implied that the experts may go against you; and if they do, how can you expect to get a sou from Messieurs Bertram and Lennard?"

Edward Graham bit his lip.

"Thank you, Monsieur Lavis," he said bitterly; "I understand—you are afraid *I* should not be able to pay *you*. Well, I shall either give you ample security, or relinquish the matter. Good morning," and he walked out erect and indignant, but with new bitterness at his heart.

CHAPTER IX.

"MY poor old auntie, you little knew what you were doing when you lured me to Saint Aubin!" thought Edward Graham, as he stood in the street and cast a desolate look around him. The old town had lost none of its picturesque attractions; it still had those dark, dingy houses, quaintly carved, which the Middle Ages had bequeathed to the nineteenth century, but its charm was gone for Edward Graham. This little stronghold of Norman art had been very fatal to him, and his eye could love it no more. Heartsick and weary, he took a dark street that led to the quay, and thence to the shore, and on that pebbly beach, in the shadow of those tall white cliffs, to the sound of those rolling waves, that had all seen the first downward turning of his fate on the day

of Mrs. Scot's acknowledged ruin, he tried to think his case over, and look his future in the face.

He found it hard, very hard indeed. He was twenty-six, he was ambitious, he was very much in love, and he saw that he must leave Saint Aubin with the stigma of a failure upon him, give up the girl he was fond of, and go back to England so poor a man that he might almost call himself penniless. Mr. Graham had a hundred a year, but his capital was small. It had been invested by the distant cousin who left him that income in foreign funds, which gave high interest. If he sold out, as he must, in order to pay the builder, very little would be left to him. Should he venture that little in a doubtful law-suit? Would that little suffice? Cruel question! He was clear-sighted enough to perceive that Monsieur Lavis thought badly of his case, and would have nothing to do with it. The man was old, selfish, and rich, but though he wanted neither work nor money, he was keen, and if he had been sure that Edward Graham must prevail over his enemies, would he have spoken as he had spoken? "No, ten times no!" thought the young man; "but

he sees that, as a foreigner, I shall be made the scapegoat, and he has no wish to follow me into the desert. Another practitioner may be less wary and less cautious—but what then? Shall I rush headlong into ruin, and mayhap disgrace, for the chance of retrieving what a keen lawyer thinks irretrievable? And yet to yield—to give in to such foul wrong—shall I do that?"

Truly the battle was a hard one; but some men understand, even in youth, the wisdom of submitting to defeat. In his heart Edward Graham felt and knew that he was beaten; he might prolong the contest, but he could only render its end more fatal. He chafed under the bitter certainty, but he could not remove it; his clear mind, his calm judgment, both told him that he had been worsted. His turret was to be destroyed—that neither he nor anyone could help; but it had also been pronounced defective, and do what he would, opinion would always go against him, and side with that falsehood. He might proclaim his wrong, but who would believe him? That white and mute witness of his skill, to which he might have appealed, would be gone; that hope and pride

of his young manhood was to perish, and all the fond dreams and happy illusions he had indulged in during its progress were to be buried under its ruins, deeper and further from the light of day than its foundations had ever been laid in the bosom of the earth.

The afternoon and more did Edward Graham spend in this bitter meditation, walking up and down the lonely shore, taking counsel from those silent friends, sea and sky, which God has given to man to soothe him in those sad hours when the very speech of his fellow-man is more than he can bear. When he went back at last to the Cité de Jérusalem, he found Mr. Cowper lounging up and down the dark street, and evidently waiting for him. No sight could be more unwelcome to Mr. Graham than that of this man's pleasant face, but he was quick to guess that some matter connected with his present trouble had brought him, and his greeting, though it could not be friendly, was at least courteous. Mr. Cowper was, as usual, airy and cheerful.

"What a delightful old nest you live in!" said he. "Hearing something of what was going on, I thought I would have a chat with

you. Shall we walk down the quay, or go up to your room?"

"We will go up to my room, if you please," was the young architect's grave answer.

He would have died just then rather than be seen by the eyes of Saint Aubin lounging about on the quay with Mr. Lennard's nephew.

"As you please," kindly said Mr. Cowper, and he followed Edward Graham up the dark stairs and into his room, which the light of the setting sun was filling with its fiery glow. "A really charming old place," said Mr. Cowper, at once taking one of the Louis XV. chairs, and stretching himself out in indolent enjoyment—"much better than that in Chelsea, I should say. By-the-by, my dear fellow, what do you mean?—excuse my interference, but what do you mean by all this?"

"By all what?" asked Edward Graham, sitting down. He spoke calmly, but his tone was cold and clear—the tone of a man whose mood will admit of no trifling.

"Well, now, look here," said Mr. Cowper, bending forward and speaking confidentially—"why not make the best of a bad bargain? Very unpleasant, and all that, I know, but why make the worst of it?"

Mr. Graham seemed to meditate, then he asked Mr. Cowper what he would have him do.

"I would have you not be your own enemy," was the prompt reply—"I would have you wait. Where is the use of going to law?"

"I shall not go to law. You may tell Mr. Lennard and Mr. Bertram as much."

Mr. Cowper looked surprised, and also rather puzzled. He evidently wanted to know more than this.

"Quite right," he murmured, with an approving nod—"quite sensible too. One never knows what time may bring forth."

"But I do," said Mr. Graham, with sudden sternness; "and since you came to know it, I can tell you what time will bring forth in this matter. I am going to pay the builder, and to have the turret pulled down."

"My dear boy," cried Mr. Cowper, with a start, "you cannot be serious."

"I never was more so."

"But pray do not be precipitate—pray do not. I am sure," and he laid strong emphasis on the word—"I am sure both my uncle and Mr. Bertram merely wish to see how the case lies in order to settle with you; but in the

meanwhile the turret must stand, of course."

"It shall fall!" said Edward Graham, somewhat vindictively. "Of course they wish for delay—of course they wish the turret to stand—shall I tell you why, Dick Cowper?" The old familiar name escaped him in the excitement of the moment. "Mr. Lennard wants to ruin me all the more surely by making that turret fall at the bidding of the law, and with the disgrace of its condemnation clinging to me for ever. Mr. Bertram has other motives. He thinks that perhaps the turret may not be doomed, after all, but that, if I get heartsick and weary, he may get it cheap out of me; but you may tell them, since they sent you to know, that they have driven me to bay, and that I would rather pull down that turret stone by stone with my own hands than let it stand one hour at their pleasure."

The southern vehemence with which he spoke struck Mr. Cowper as it had struck Monsieur Lavis.

"On my word," said he, admiringly, "I should be the architect, and you should be the barrister, Graham. You were cut out for it. Now don't look exasperated, man—I speak in

sober earnest. There, there, we will say no more on that head; but with regard to the pulling down of the turret, remember that it is on little Lily Bertram's land, and that both Mr. Lennard and Mr. Bertram may prevent you from——"

"Let them if they dare!" interrupted Edward Graham. "The turret is mine, or it is theirs. If it be theirs, let them prove it by paying me; if they refuse to do so, it is mine, and I will do what I like with my own. I will spend the last shilling I have," he added, stamping his foot on the floor, "before they shall rob me doubly. Well," said he, turning almost fiercely on his visitor, "what have you got to say to that? Will they pay, or will they not?"

Mr. Cowper shook his head.

"My dear boy," he answered soothingly, "my uncle and Mr. Bertram are bent on conciliation, but money in the present state of things is out of the question."

"Listen," said Edward Graham, suddenly calming down: "one concession I will make. Let them settle with the builder, and I will suspend my claim upon them until the fate of the turret is known. Nay," he added, with a

bitter laugh, "I will do more. I will hold them free if they will settle with Merle, and pay the man his just debt."

Mr. Cowper shook his head again.

"I can transmit your proposal," said he, "but——"

"Do not," interrupted Edward Graham, with a scornful gesture; "you were sent here to know, and, if possible, to weaken my purpose, but for nothing else. These two men, who hate each other so mortally, have combined against me, and are bent on my ruin. For a time, at least, they will succeed; but as to the turret, you know its fate, and what you know you may tell. Let them oppose me, if they dare! Destroyed it shall be, and the act shall be mine, not theirs. The turret shall fall because they are robbing me, and that I will have the value of the stone, if I have nothing else. Do not tell me that it stands on their land, and that I cannot touch it. If it be so, I shall be glad, for my case will be so clear that I must go to law, no matter what the cost may be—no matter whom I drag down with me if I fall."

"A dangerous man," thought Mr. Cowper, watching his flashing eyes and quivering lips,

"and just the one to do what he says, too." "Well, well," he remarked aloud, in a deprecating voice, "yours is a very hard case, I must say, and I do not wonder that you are a wee bit put out; but is it so very certain that this unlucky turret is doomed—that the inspector cannot be made to think otherwise—in short, that matters cannot be mended?"

"Is it certain that Messrs. Lennard and Bertram have refused to acknowledge my debt?" asked Edward Graham. "That is the only question between us. Let the inspector and his verdict stand for what they are worth."

It was evident that, unless on the question of money, he would not speak; and as on that question Mr. Cowper could not enter, he thought it prudent to utter an amiable, "Just so," and to rise and take his leave.

Edward Graham had the healthy appetite of a young man in his prime, but this evening, when he sat down to his solitary dinner in the *salle* on the ground-floor of the Cité de Jérusalem, he could not eat. The day had been a hard one, but its bitterest hour lay before him yet. He had to see Lily Scot, and to tell her his defeat.

Ever since misfortune had first threatened him, it had been a trial to the young man to enter Mrs. Scot's house. Mrs. Scot had been quick to perceive that her daughter's prospects of marriage with Edward Graham were probably over, and though she was not aware of it, the doubt had lowered him greatly in her opinion. Sarah Webster, who had not looked with much favour on the young architect since Mrs. Scot's losses, helped to strengthen the impression of his incapacity in the lady's mind. "Mr. Graham was very clever, of course," artfully said the nurse; "but from what that Laurent said, she fancied that the turret was not much in his way. It stood to reason that every gentleman had a way of his own in those things, and Laurent said——"

"I wish you would not talk such nonsense," interrupted Mrs. Scot, pettishly. "Of course Mr. Graham is very clever, and who cares for what that Laurent says?"

"So I say, ma'am," promptly rejoined nurse —"of course Mr. Graham is clever."

But Laurent's verdict, which had told with her, told also with her mistress. The clever, idle, good-for-nothing fellow seemed to have

stayed in Saint Aubin, lounging about the cafés only to injure Mr. Graham, and every word he said was somehow or other known, commented upon, and repeated; and though Mrs. Scot was very angry with Mr. Lennard, and thought the inspector a meddlesome fellow, she felt by no means sure that Mr. Graham was right, and Mr. Graham was too keen and too sensitive not to see and resent her doubt of his skill. And yet even this could have been borne if Lily Scot —his Lily—had been more sanguine and hopeful. But though she was sweetness itself when they met—though her sympathy with his anxiety was entire, and her sense of his trouble was deep—no passionate, indignant protest ever fell from her lips—no womanly, vehement, and unreasonable certainty that he was right, and that everybody else was wrong, ever appeared in her looks. This, too, Mr. Graham had seen and felt to the heart's core, and so to go this evening to Mrs. Scot's house, and to face that lady and her daughter, and tell them both that it was all over, was very hard indeed.

The moment she opened the door, and let him in, Sarah Webster read the truth in his face, and her own gipsy face darkened again as she gave him a stealthy look.

"Yes, sir," said she, showing him into the drawing-room, "the ladies are all there. Miss Scot's head is bad, poor dear, but she has not gone to her room yet."

This hint that he had better not stay too long fell unheeded on the young man's ear. His heart was sick, his cheeks were colourless, his very lips were white, as he entered the room. Mrs. Scot, who was lying on the sofa, sat up to welcome him, and he did not see her. Jane and Louisa made way for him as he walked towards their sister, and he did not see them; he only saw the sweet pale face, the wistful dark eyes, the gentle smile of welcome, and from the depths of his full heart he cried, as he took her hand—

"Lily, it is all over!"

Lily hung her head, and did not speak.

"The will of God be done," she said at last; then, with a heavy, sorrowful sigh, she sat down, and Mr. Graham, still holding her hand within his own, sat down by her with his look fastened on her face.

"What is all over?" asked Mrs. Scot, a little stiffly. "You come in like a ghost, Mr. Graham, and you speak in riddles."

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Scot," said he, with a dreary sigh—"what I meant was that the inspector has written, the turret is doomed, Mr. Bertram refuses to pay me, and I shall have to sell out the capital of my income to pay the builder."

"Well, Mr. Graham, if you will do that," cried Mrs. Scot, in great indignation, "what can be expected?"

Mr. Graham did not heed her; he was looking his last on the face he loved.

"So absurd!" continued Mrs. Scot.

"Absurd!" echoed the young man, with something like a frown—"what else would you have me do, Mrs. Scot?"

"Keep your money, of course," was that lady's intrepid reply. "How can you pay people if people will not pay you?"

Edward Graham did not choose to argue the point; he looked at Lily, but her eyes were downcast.

"Of course it is throwing every chance away," pursued Mrs. Scot, triumphing in her logic. "What can you expect if you will sell out to pay that builder?"

"True," answered Edward Graham—"I can

expect nothing, nor do I, Mrs. Scot—nothing."

"Well, Mr. Graham," said Mrs. Scot, whom his calmness only exasperated, "you must allow me to say that my daughter is very ill-used, and—" but here Mrs. Scot's wrath melted into sorrow, and she burst into tears. Louisa and Jane at once began to sob, and Lily, looking in her lover's face, allowed two pearly drops to flow down her cheeks.

"My poor Lily!" he fondly said; "you deserved a better fate."

"I shall never blame you," answered Lily, very gently, but acquiescing without demur in what she had long foreseen.

Mr. Graham rose; he was stung, though he did not know it, to be so readily excused and forgiven, and, so to speak, dropped out of the life that was to have been mingled with his.

"Mrs. Scot," said he, turning to that lady, "your sense of your dear daughter's wrong cannot be greater than is mine; but do me the justice to say that I have been honest, and that I am the greater sufferer of the two. It will not be hard for her to find a better and a more fortunate man than Edward Graham; but where will he ever find another Lily?—never! never!"

said he, in a voice full of sorrow. "And yet in common honesty I cannot, I must not try to keep her. I am, or soon will be, penniless; and I have no name, no position, nothing that would warrant me in asking you to sanction a long engagement. We must part, and I suppose the sooner we do so the better. Good-bye, Mrs. Scot—think as kindly of me as you can. Good-bye, Miss Scot. I must not say Lily now—you are mine no more. Good-bye; God bless you and forgive me!"

"I have nothing to forgive," answered Lily, who had risen, and stood very pale before him. "You have been, and still are, the soul of honour. We are parted because you are honourable and true, and cannot be otherwise. God will bless you, Mr. Graham, and I shall always think of you as of a dear good friend with whom I could have been very happy—if God had so willed it," she added, with a low, sad sigh.

He did not take her in his arms, he did not kiss her cheek. Caresses were not granted to this last adieu, but he raised her cold hand to his lips and said not a word.

"Mr. Graham, you have behaved nobly!"

cried Mrs. Scot, when he turned to her, for consistency was not the good lady's *forte;* "and I shall always say so—always," she added, with a sob.

"Good-bye—good-bye, Mr. Graham," also sobbed Louisa and Jane.

"Lily," said he, looking at her wistfully, "it is all over, I believe; but I shall see the inspector before I leave France, and—and if anything good should turn up, I may come back, may I not?"

Her lips were silent, but her eyes said "Yes." He sighed heavily, and left the room.

Sarah, who had been listening at the keyhole, started back as he came out. Almost at the same moment there was a knock at the gate, and when the nurse opened it, Miss Bertram, in her white hood, darted in. On seeing Mr. Graham, she uttered a little cry, and hiding her face in her hands flew up the old stairs on which he had first seen her. The child felt honest shame, and could not look the wronged man in the face.

"Poor little Lily Bertram!" thought he, as he walked down the street—"may heaven

never visit the sin of your father upon you, for you were true!"

Yes, she had been true, but he soon forgot her. It was all over; it seemed like a bitter dream, but it was a cruel reality, and he knew it and felt it in a strange hard way. As he went down the street, he passed by a church, dedicated to Saint Anne. People were going in for the evening service; he remembered having been there once with Miss Scot—it was her parish church. Now he entered it alone. The wax lights burned dimly on the altar; a few people were scattered on the dark benches; a priest was saying the Rosary, and the congregation was answering.

Edward Graham entered the nearest bench. A woman and her child were its only tenants. For some time he listened to her voice, as if it came from some remote shore, with a great sea between that voice and him. This had been a hard day—the hardest in Edward Graham's life. A day of great wrong, of wrath, and revengeful feelings; a day of cruel suffering, of fair hopes blasted, and honest love wrecked; a day of sorrow, and also a day of sin.

"Our Father, who art in heaven," said the priest.

"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us," answered the woman, and even the little child by her side gabbled through the prayer, as children do.

Forgive us, as we wish to be forgiven—precept that seems so easy, and that is so hard! For who would not ask for God's mercy, and who, alas! is willing to extend it? "Can I do that?" the young man thought, and his mind, fastening on that question, forgot all else, till the woman's voice roused him again. The priest had said the Hail Mary, and she had answered: "Pray for us now, and in the hour of our death."

In the hour of our death! Pray for us in that sad hour, which is to close the happiest life, and in which we all need prayer so sorely. Pray for us now—that now, which is the very stream of life, which flows in shade or sunshine, which is sometimes so glad, and sometimes, too, so sorrowful. Ay, pray for us now, Mary, in whose merciful arms the Word made flesh so often rested—pray for us, who are all in such sore need of prayer—pray for poor Edward

Graham, who has bowed his head in his hands, and his pride all broken, his hardness all gone, is crying like a child on its mother's breast.

CHAPTER X.

THE easterly wind was bitterly cold, but Mrs. Graham's cosy English parlour felt warm with the coal fire burning brightly in the grate, and the lamp shedding its mild clear light in the room. Mrs. Graham sat alone, knitting, and she looked very pleasant and comfortable, till a sudden cloud overspread her open brow. "I wonder if these poor Thompsons have any coals?" thought Mrs. Graham, anxiously. "Perhaps they have not, and the poor wife so delicate, and this such a cold Spring! Now suppose she should take cold, and have bronchitis, and die, what is to become of all these children—nine of them, and one a baby? Oh! the baby would be sure to die too," desperately added Mrs. Graham. "As to that, I suppose nothing better could happen it,

poor little innocent; and if the whole of these nine little Thompsons were to die, I can't see——"

Here Mrs. Graham's neat little parlou-rmaid tapped at the door, and opening it, said:

"Please, ma'am, here's Mr. Graham," and almost as she spoke Edward Graham came in.

"My goodness!" cried Mrs. Graham, letting her knitting fall in her amazement, "who would have expected you, Ned? And tea is over, too —not that you cannot have some fresh made for you—and whatever does bring you dropping upon me in that fashion? Is the turret finished?"

"Oh, yes," he answered, with a bitter laugh —"quite finished, auntie;" and having shaken hands with his aunt, he sat down and stared gloomily at the fire.

"I am so glad!" cried Mrs. Graham.

"Yes, auntie, it is quite finished," he resumed; "and that is why I have come to borrow money from you—can you lend me a hundred pounds?"

"To marry Lily Scot at once!" cried Mrs. Graham, beaming. "Of course I can, my dear boy," she added, rising and going to her bureau.

"And when is it to be?" said she, coming back with her cheque-book in her hand. "What shall I give Lily—a diamond-ring, eh?"

She gave him an inquiring look, which he did not see. He had out of his slender means given Miss Scot a little turquoise ring when they were engaged; and when he kissed her hand at parting he had seen that little blue ring on her slender finger. In his heart he had thanked her for not even speaking of returning it, for keeping the gift of the lover when that lost lover must become an unseen friend. With his aunt's question about the diamond ring, that little ring and the parting, both came back.

"Well, we shall see," said Mrs. Graham, rather disappointed; "perhaps Lily herself will tell me what she would like, for I must go and see my god-daughter married," she added, nodding at her gloomy and silent nephew. This was more than Edward Graham could bear.

"Aunt, aunt," he said, turning his head away in the vain attempt not to break down, "it is all over. Miss Scot and I have parted. The turret is demolished, or will be. I am a ruined man; and, I tell you honestly, aunt, that you

may never see your hundred pounds again."

Mrs. Graham stared at her nephew, and thought, "Is the poor fellow's mind gone? Has the turret been too much for him?" But if there were signs of grief about Edward Graham, there were none of those tokens which betray a wandering mind. He looked himself even in his heavy sorrow. The conviction that he had been speaking the cruel truth filled Mrs. Graham's mind with dismay.

"My dear boy," said she, "my poor Ned, what do you mean?"

"Every word I say, auntie; but you shall know." And he told her all.

Mr. Graham was not a weak man, and he could bear misfortune; but it was a wonderful relief to him to relate his bitter trouble to one who loved him, who had faith in him, whose indignation rose when she heard his wrong, whose tears flowed at the story of his sorrow. And he told her all, every word, all we know, much that we have not mentioned, as being of small importance; also that interview with the inspector which had sealed his fate, and which he had sought after parting from Lily Scot. It had been decisive. The inspector had adhered

to the unfavourable opinion he had formed of the turret, but candidly acknowledged that, whatever its merits might be, the turret was doomed.

"You have certainly fallen into a trap," said he to Edward Graham; "and, in my opinion, you ought to appeal to the law for redress."

"And why don't you?" cried Mrs. Graham, her blue eyes sparkling. "Why don't you, Ned? I will bear all the expenses, every shilling, that I will, to see you righted."

"Dear old auntie," said he, taking her hand and shaking it cordially, "of course you would —of course I knew that you would; but would I let you!—never—never! If I had money enough to pay Merle, and to undertake such a law-suit as that would have been, I would have risked my last shilling rather than submit to such a wrong. But I would not risk your money, still less that poor builder's, and so I have given in, not without a struggle, but entirely. Not one look behind will I cast, auntie. I am going to begin a new life to-morrow, and to look straight before me—like a man."

He rose, and walked up and down his aunt's parlour in some excitement. He already felt

lighter-hearted, ready to begin the hard battle of life over again.

"Ned, you are a fine fellow," cried Mrs. Graham, with a sob; "but oh! the poor turret—to have it pulled down!"

He stood still in the middle of the room, as if a blow had struck him. That first labour of love flashed before him white and fair, as it should have been if men had not been unjust and Fortune unkind. And it was so nearly finished—a few days more, and it would have proclaimed his skill to all. Even Merle, the builder, had all but wept over it as Edward Graham left him his last instructions. "Monsieur, it is murder!" he had said pathetically. "Is there no hope? Such a beautiful thing, built of such fine stone—must we destroy it with our own hands?"

"It must fall," the young architect had answered, in a stern, hard voice, "and the sooner it falls the better for us both, Monsieur Merle."

And now his aunt, too, said, "Oh, the poor turret!" and to hear her was to go over the old bitterness all over again. He felt he could not bear it.

"Good night, auntie," said he, with a start.

"I have given you my good news, and I must be gone."

In vain Mrs. Graham pressed him to stay; now that he had relieved his full heart, the young man again wanted solitude. Moreover, Mrs. Graham, though the best and kindest of human beings, had a strange, trying way of probing one's wounds to the quick. Edward Graham knew he could not listen to her; so, taking the cheque which she thrust in his hand, with a quiet, "Thank you, auntie," he left her.

After his fruitless interview with the inspector, Edward Graham had gone and settled with Monsieur Merle at Changy, and thence written to know if he could have his old lodgings in Chelsea once more. The reply had come before his transactions with Monsieur Merle were over. It was favourable; the parlours had been empty seven weeks and three days, as Mrs. Rawlings, the landlady, had ruefully remarked to Charlotte, her maid and counsellor —"and a nicer, quieter gentleman than Mr. Graham no one need wish to have." Charlotte echoed the sentiment, and Edward Graham's sad return to his old home—that return which filled him with so much bitterness—was wel-

comed by Mrs. Rawlings and Charlotte as a special dispensation of Providence in their favour. So true is the old saying, that it is an ill wind which blows nobody good. To Chelsea Edward Graham had driven on his return; he had merely passed through Saint Aubin without stopping; to Chelsea he now walked on leaving his aunt. With a weary sigh he entered the dull parlour, where no cheerful fire was blazing, and putting up the cheque without looking at it, he found out the next day that it was for two hundred pounds, for Mrs. Graham always had a balance at her banker's; he stood and stared moodily before him, looking his new destiny in the face. "You are hard and bitter enough," said he, addressing that invisible enemy, "but with God's help I shall prevail over you yet. And now I must write to Lily Scot."

He sat down, wrote a line, no more, then went out, and posted the brief missive with his own hands. The night was clear and starry as he walked back; the gaslights flared in the easterly wind. It was not blowing towards the French shore, but Edward Graham forgot that, and sending it to the old Norman city, he

followed it in its flight. What would she be doing?—how would she feel?—how would she look when his letter was placed in her hands? We require not the wings of the wind to know what Edward Graham never knew.

The day had been a trying one to Mrs. Scot. It so happened that she had been condoled with all day long, and we all know that condolence is sometimes more than one's nerves can bear. Moreover, too much of one thing is apt to be good-for-nothing, and when evening came, and the infliction was over, Mrs. Scot was rather irritable.

"What is that?" said she, when Sarah came in, and handed Edward Graham's letter to her young mistress.

"I believe it is from Mr. Graham, mamma," said Lily sadly.

"And what business has Mr. Graham to be writing to you now?" asked Mrs. Scot, in a tone of injured dignity. "I think Mr. Graham has behaved shamefully, and I will not allow any correspondence. What is the use of his writing? What can he say?"

"He does not say much, mamma."

Mrs. Scot, however, was going to utter another indignant protest against Mr. Graham's saying anything, when Jane and Louisa entered the room together, crying in a breath, "Lily, what is the name of William's ship?"

"The *Lady Rose*," answered Lily.

"There," said Jane, turning on her sister, "I told you so—Rose, not Rosa. Well, it seems it has been spoken with at sea. Some one told Lily Bertram, and she has just told us."

"Ah!" said Lily, looking before her like one in a dream, and still holding Edward Graham's letter in her inert hand.

"Well, and what does Mr. Graham say?" asked Mrs. Scot again.

"'Good-bye—God for ever bless you!'" answered Lily, without looking at the letter.

"You don't mean to say that Mr. Graham sends no message to *me?*" exclaimed Mrs. Scot, evidently affronted.

"He only says that—'Good-bye; God for ever bless you!'" repeated Lily, almost mechanically.

"Then Mr. Graham is a very uncivil man," said Mrs. Scot, "and I am *very* glad," she emphatically added, "that it is all over."

"Yes, it is all over," said Lily, and she sighed, and folded up Mr. Graham's letter, and took up her work again.

CHAPTER XI.

FALLS that seem as if they should be fatal are not always so, and thus it proved with Edward Graham. Thanks to his aunt's two hundred pounds—thanks to his resolve not to be beaten, and thanks to Sir Edmund Shrievewell, who took up his cause, and helped him to work in a moderate way, he struggled on, and did not sink into those depths out of which a professional man so seldom rises. He was still a poor man, and it seemed as if he might be so all his life; but he could live, and he was not without hopes of paying back his aunt her money some day. She did not wish to have it back, he knew that well, but his pride was in it; not for worlds would he have turned the debt into a gift, and thus confessed himself doomed to life-long poverty.

And yet two years, and nearly three, had passed away, and Edward Graham did not seem much nearer to the payment of those two hundred pounds than on that Spring evening when he walked home with his aunt's cheque in his pocket. Many a time hope had deluded him with promises which had melted away into thin air—many a time success had seemed within his reach, and slipped out of his grasp. At last something tangible came—something which might prove a first step on that high road from which he had been excluded so long. Sir Edmund Shrievewell had gone to the Continent for his health, and before going he had recommended Edward Graham to Mr. Blake, the great commoner and millionaire. Blake House wanted some slight repairs, and Sir Edmund Shrievewell was very sick of Mr. Blake, who was crotchetty and ill-tempered, and if Mr. Blake would take up with that poor unlucky fellow Graham, and not pester him, Sir Edmund Shrievewell, any more, he, Sir Edmund Shrievewell, would be glad. The young man called upon Mr. Blake at his house in Berkeley Square, and was favourably received. Mr. Blake had the gout just then, and gave him the full history of his malady.

"May be useful to you, sir," said he. "I can see that you will have the gout some day. I am never mistaken. Well, Doctor Sims says I may be up again in a week or so, and if you are disengaged then, Mr. Graham, we will go down to Blake House together and see what there is to do to the old place. Very little, I believe. I shall write to you as soon as I can stir; or perhaps you will not mind calling on me again, eh?"

Mr. Graham, poor fellow, was most willing to call, and when he did call was very kindly received. Mr. Blake, who was dull just then, asked him to stay to dinner, and was much pleased with his easy manners and his clear and sensible way of explaining professional matters.

"Mr. Graham," said he, as they parted, "it strikes me that you are the very man I wanted all along."

"I hope so," honestly answered Edward Graham, whose dark eyes sparkled.

Doctor Sims had enjoined early hours, as Mr. Blake had told his guest. It was barely nine when they parted, and not ten yet when Edward Graham reached Chelsea. He let himself in, as usual, with his latch-key, and with more

surprise than pleasure he found Mr. Cowper waiting for him in his sitting-room, and lounging indolently in his easy-chair. They had not met since Mr. Graham had left Saint Aubin, and the aspect of Mr. Cowper, which had never been pleasant to him, recalled too vividly the bitterest day in his life to be pleasant now. Involuntarily his face darkened; involuntarily, too, his welcome was constrained and cold, but Mr. Cowper, always delightfully at his ease, did not or would not see this. He was cordial and airy and cheerful, and gave Mr. Graham time to recover his usual manner, and also to take some note of his guest.

Sure though subtle are the signs which show when a man is down in the world. Mr. Cowper was smoking when Edward Graham came in; the smell of his cigar, which was not a choice one, at once struck the young man as significant. He looked at him more keenly. Mr. Cowper was not shabby yet, but he was no longer a well-dressed man. The unpretending luxuriousness of his garments was gone; their texture was no longer fine; their cut was no longer irreproachable. It would be hard to say that he wore a look of care, but calm content

no longer sat on Mr. Cowper's brow. Moreover, Mr. Cowper now had a *blasé*, wearied air —an air of half-dissipation, which had been foreign to him formerly. It was as if the man had sunk morally as well as socially, and that either he had flung off restraints which he had acknowledged before, or that the freshness and vigour of youth were gone, and no longer concealed youth's secret sins. Another change too there was with which Edward Graham was struck at once—Mr. Cowper, once so calmly indifferent to everything, was now both communicative and inquiring, and as he spoke and gave information, or requested it, Mr. Cowper also had the watchful, furtive look of a man on the alert, who is ready for whatever chance may turn up—for money, for news, for help, or for hope.

"Well, and how are you?" said he, in his cheerful, airy way, and without seeming to notice the start of surprise which Edward Graham had not been able to repress on seeing him; "and how have you got on since we met, or rather parted, in Saint Aubin. Well, I hope, and still faithful to architecture?"

"And how have you got on?" retorted Mr.

Graham, by no means pleased with this address. "Still faithful to the bar, I hope?"

"Well, no," candidly answered Mr. Cowper. "I have given up the bar, to tell you the truth," he confidentially added. "I found it slow."

"I believe you found architecture slow formerly?" said Mr. Graham, drily.

"Awfully slow, and therefore I left it; but I now think the bar slower still. Now don't you find architecture slow?" he added, suddenly, and his look wandered significantly round the room, the furniture of which had got rather dingy all these years.

"No; why should I?" sharply answered the young architect.

"Ah! plenty to do," remarked Mr. Cowper, with a half-smile—"houses, villas, and so on, and a heavy bill paid in crisp bank-notes every now and then. Lucky fellow! Well, *I* find the bar slow, though to be sure everything is slow in this world of ours—very slow," added Mr. Cowper, gently sipping some cold brandy-and-water which his host had poured out for him. "Now Saint Aubin was as slow a place as one can imagine!" And so saying he looked hard at Edward Graham.

The young man was silent—he had nothing to say about Saint Aubin.

"I was there last Spring," resumed Mr. Cowper, "and I declare it was as slow as ever. By-the-by, Mr. Bertram was rather unwell—I hear he is very ill now; and he had quite veered round about the turret. The inspector had died suddenly, the commission had given up the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, and Mr. Bertram considered himself an ill-used man. Your turret, which he called his, was, he declared, both beautiful and solid, and he mourned over it; and Mr. Kenelm, a new-comer, told me confidentially that Mr. Bertram must have been a heavy loser by that turret of his, sir. To do him justice, Mr. Bertram also seemed very sorry for you."

"Mr. Bertram is very kind," said Edward Graham, ironically.

"Never came to any settlement, I suppose?" remarked Mr. Cowper. "Rather hard upon you. But you were precipitate. I told you so at the time. Where was the use? I always take things easy," he resumed in his complacent way; "but you never did. I remember when we were both at the old fellow's at Ful-

ham—by the way, what has become of him?"

"He is dead," drily replied Mr. Graham, who did not relish this allusion to their early companionship.

"Is he?" said Mr. Cowper, taking another sip of brandy-and-water—"poor old fellow! He was clever in his way. Where did he pick up all those things he made us draw, I wonder? I remember them, tombs, chapels, monuments—they were really good, were they not?"

"They were the masterpieces of mediæval art," said Edward Graham.

"Ah! to be sure, you are up to all that. Well, I am sorry that architecture was slow, very sorry that the bar is worse. I wonder what I shall take to?" reflectively added Mr. Cowper. "Perhaps I shall turn nephew, and cultivate my uncle, Mr. Lennard."

"Why not your aunt, Miss Cowper?"

"Oh! my aunt and I have had a difference. She was really getting too mediæval and too earnest. I endeavoured to show her the error of her ways and affronted her, which was a pity, for she was very kind after a fashion. Did you ever see her about these almshouses? No.

Well, they are not built yet. Yes, I must cultivate my uncle, Mr. Lennard. Saint Aubin is slow, but one gets used to that; and there is capital fishing; and there are some rather nice girls too," kindly added Mr. Cowper.

"And Mr. Lennard is willing to be cultivated?" suggested Edward Graham, looking sceptic.

"Not willing, my dear fellow, but most anxious. The poor old gentleman has made rather a bad thing of his difference with Mr. Bertram. He and Saint Aubin have quarrelled, you know, and Saint Aubin is always getting the best of it. You cannot imagine how it worries him. He is always up to some mischief or other to vex Saint Aubin, and Saint Aubin pays him back richly, and the war goes on. The last battle was about the sea-baths. Mr. Lennard laid a complaint that the police regulations were not carried out, whereupon French Saint Aubin black-balled him from the Cercle—a strong step, which it had not yet taken; and English Saint Aubin turned him out of the reading-room, so the poor old boy is getting tired of it, I suppose, and wants me to cultivate him."

"And perhaps to get friends back again with Saint Aubin," shrewdly suggested Mr. Graham.

"I should not wonder if that were not his feeling, and perhaps—yes, perhaps I might do worse. Fishing is slow, but it can't be slower than the bar," added Mr. Cowper, with a tinge of melancholy in his voice. "You have no thoughts of going back to Saint Aubin, I suppose?" said he, with a sudden change. "No—ah! I thought so. And you find architecture to answer?"

"A man must have a profession," replied Edward Graham, scorning to tell an untruth, "and on that plea mine answers me."

"Must a man have a profession?" asked Mr. Cowper. "Do you know that seems a very open question to me. However, you will stick to architecture, I see. Well, somehow or other I have never been able to do it. There is nothing of the burr in me," added Mr. Cowper, gracefully taking the last sip out of his glass, and rising to go. "I stick to nothing. Good night. I daresay the next account you hear of me is that I am virtuously settled in Saint Aubin. Don't you think, though, it will be horribly dull?" he added, with something like gloom.

"Oh! it will be slow, but sure," was the consolatory answer.

"I suppose so. Well, good night," and he walked out, and Edward Graham sighed, relieved, but, true to his old superstitious feeling, he wished "that Cowper had not turned up so soon after his conversation with Mr. Blake."

And indeed, when the young architect called again on Mr. Blake at the end of the week, he was denied admittance by a solemn footman, who informed him that Mr. Blake was too ill to see anyone. "My usual luck," thought the poor fellow. "But then Dick Cowper looked in upon me that evening."

But even an evil eye cannot exercise a permanent influence. Mr. Blake got well, and Edward Graham and he went down to Blake House together, and the young architect spent two weeks there, and everything was going on charmingly, when Mr. Blake was ordered to some watering-place or other at the end of England farthest from Blake House, and everything was put by and suspended, to the young man's consternation.

"Oh! I shall be back in a fortnight," said Mr. Blake cheerfully, "but I like to see it going

on; so, as you have so much to do, Mr. Graham, why, you had better go back to town."

"The weather may change," suggested Edward Graham.

"Not a bit—not a bit; we are in for a fine September, Mr. Graham, and October will be better still. However, you must not give me the slip. I must have you by the tenth, Mr. Graham—not a day later."

Mr. Graham was imprudent enough to suggest the eighth, or even the sixth, but Mr. Blake scouted either.

"The tenth, Mr. Graham—Thursday, the tenth, if you please." And thus they parted.

"Will he be back by the tenth?" mused Edward Graham, as he leaned back in the railway carriage, and his eye wandered over a rich landscape, which he did not see, "or will he put me off again, and keep me years, perhaps, without even paying me the little he owes me now. Sir Edward Shrievewell was sick of him, I know. Please heaven that such, too, may not be my fate before I have done with Mr. Blake!"

Night had set in when Edward Graham reached his lodgings.

"Three letters for you, sir," said the maid, as she opened the door of his parlour, and laid the light she held on the table; "and Mrs. Rawlings says, sir, that one of them must be from foreign parts, on account of the stamp, and the postman says it is over-weight, and there was eightpence to pay, and Mrs. Rawlings paid it, and she said she was sure you would not mind."

"All right—all right," said Edward Graham, a little impatiently.

In a moment his keen eye had singled out the foreign letter from its companions. At once his hand was stretched out towards it, and as he took it up, and recognised his aunt's scrawling handwriting, and the Saint Aubin postmark, a flush rose to his olive cheek, and a quicker throb came to the pulses of his heart. What had taken his aunt over to Saint Aubin?

What would she have to tell him? The past was dead; he knew it, and had no hopes, no illusions concerning that dead past, and yet his heart beat as we said, and he felt the thrill of a bygone pain as he opened his aunt's letter and read it, standing by the cold unfriendly hearth of his cheerless home.

Wounds heal over, and scars are hidden, and brave hearts learn to suffer in silence, and the world easily forgets the very existence of their sorrows; but though great troubles do not always work great changes in our outward life, that nature must indeed be shallow on which grief can pass and "make no sign."

To plunge into the very middle of a subject was Mrs. Graham's method in conversation. She was less erratic in her letters, but traces of the tendency were apparent, nevertheless, and her nephew was more annoyed than surprised to have to read her epistle to the very last line before he could apprehend its meaning.

"My dear Boy,

"You must try and come at once and catch the train, and not lose a moment," impetuously began Mrs. Graham. "Mrs. Petherick says there is a new boat, and that you must take it as one is not half so ill upon it as on the others, but Captain Jekyll says it is all bosh. However, I wish I had known about it, for I was dreadfully sick. At all events, you must make haste and come; but pray, my dear boy, do not think any more of Lily Scot, as I

really believe she is going to get married. It is no use telling you to whom nor talking about it; of course it is over and all that, still it must be painful, and that was why I did not tell you I was coming, but Mrs. Scot wrote such a letter that I thought the wedding-day was fixed. However, when you come, you can go straight to the Cité de Jérusalem and have your old room, and I shall go round and have a talk with you. Remember that, if you want money, I have plenty just now. You will be shocked to see Mr. Bertram; he is as white as a ghost. I never saw anyone so altered. Little Lily Bertram, too, who is as tall as Lily Scot now, is much changed; she is getting quite a pretty girl, but is so much fagged by her father's illness that it makes one's heart ache to look at her. Mr. Lennard is as wicked as ever, and the quarrel has not been made up; but Mrs. Scot is all for him now, and though she became so mysterious as soon as I arrived, I may as well tell you why: Mrs. Petherick declares that Lily Scot is sure to marry Mr. Cowper. He has been *so* attentive of late, and the sailor-boy who is at Saint Aubin just now, is like a Bengal tiger about it—so

says Captain Jekyll, but it was Mrs. Petherick who told me first, for Mrs. Scot, though she drops hints, and is affronted with Mr. Bertram because he took a musical governess for Lily Bertram, does not talk of it. However, as all Saint Aubin knows of it, I cannot see why you should not, especially as Mr. Cowper is going to settle at Saint Aubin, and you really must come about your own business. Mr. Bertram would not tell me any more, and that was not much, though I hope, my dear boy, it is all true; but he certainly is very anxious that you should have compensation for your cruel loss, and he feels, poor man, that he has no time to lose. So pray, do come at once, for surely it is worth the risk. Louisa has just come to say that it is post time, so good-bye, my dear Edward; come, and lose no time. Mr. Bertram is very ill, poor little Lily Bertram is not aware of it, but the doctor has given him up, and there is no knowing how long he may last.

"Your affectionate aunt,

"MARY GRAHAM."

In vain Edward Graham tried to control his feelings as he read this letter. The blood would

forsake his cheeks, a jealous pain would thrill through his very heart. "And will she marry him? will that be the end? was it for that he came here, to know how matters stood? was it for that he went to Saint Aubin? Of course it was that he meant by settling virtuously down in Saint Aubin and cultivating Mr. Lennard. He meant an idle life at Mr. Lennard's expense, and marriage with Lily Scot! Well, what is it to me? Is she not free? If Mr. Lennard wants to get back into Saint Aubin society by making his nephew marry the prettiest and most agreeable girl in the place, what is it to me? Must she not marry some one, and can I say that Richard Cowper will make an unkind husband?" All this was very true, but it was hard to think that the girl he had so loved was going to marry the man whom he had always disliked. And yet Mr. Graham was just enough to confess to himself that Miss Scot might be a happy woman with Richard Cowper—"happier than with poverty and me," was his sad and bitter conclusion.

Those passages of his aunt's letter which referred to the probability of Miss Scot's marriage, had engrossed him to the detriment of all she

said concerning Mr. Bertram. He had read and understood all she wrote, but vaguely and coldly. The poor man was ill and was going to die, and Mr. Graham forgave him the great wrong he had done him, and was sorry for his daughter. But such things happen daily; and as to going over to Saint Aubin at a sick man's call and for a sick man's fancy, in the vain hope of getting back what was irretrievably lost, why, it was mere folly, and not to be thought of, that was all.

Edward Graham took up his other letters; they were unimportant, and he soon threw them down again and read his aunt's epistle once more. He read it till, little by little, he worked himself into a fever of unrest, and strange tormenting fancies began to flit through his brain. Why should Lily Scot marry Richard Cowper? He could not believe that she really liked that indolent, *blasé* man. It was one of those dreadful marriages of expediency in which women give their all for a comfortable home. Oh! if anyone could save her—so sweet, so fair, so gentle, and so good—from that hard lot! A little money would do it—money, the blessing and the curse of lovers! For Mr. Graham was a lover

still. The mere thought that Lily Scot could be utterly lost to him, showed him how strong a hold she still had on his heart. He had given her up, but no doubt there had been a lurking hope in his very renunciation, since the faintest chance of winning her back could agitate him thus. That message of Mr. Bertram's which he had so scouted, suddenly wore a look of probability. Why should a dying man send for him if there were not something in it after all? Compensation! Was it possible that he should get back his own? Why, in that case, and if Lily Scot were still free and willing, he could—why not—he could marry her. Give him back his hundred a year, added to his improved prospects, and Mr. Graham could certainly marry; not in splendour, or affluence, or even much comfort, but still he could marry. And Mrs. Scot, and Jane, and Louisa! The young man paused in his speculations as he remembered the existence of these three women; he had forgotten them, but he could not help recollecting them now—the delicate, exacting mother, the giddy, useless sisters. What should he do with them? He bit his lip and sighed. Lily Scot, who had seemed so near

that he could see the light in her dark eyes, that she seemed to be standing by him in the dull English parlour, making it pleasant with her smile, Lily Scot, alas! faded once more and became as shadowy an image, and as dim as she had been for the last two years and more.

"I must not think of her," said the poor fellow to his own thoughts; "the bitter struggle is over, why renew it? We cannot marry, and we must not love. It would be madness in me, and misery to both; but there may be something in Mr. Bertram's message, after all, and—and aunt is right, I must go over to Saint Aubin and see about it. It is worth the risk."

If the young man deluded himself, if to meet Lily Scot once more and be on the spot ready for the faintest chance of winning her back from Dick Cowper, was as much in his secret thoughts as to "see about it," on Mr. Bertram's vague promise of compensation, who shall blame him?

CHAPTER XII.

NIGHT had set in when the ricketty car which conveyed passengers from Dieppe to Saint Aubin rattled into the courtyard of the Cité de Jérusalem with the usual clatter of horses and jingling of bells. The shrill voices of Norman servant girls rose above the din, and in the swift moving of lights to and fro, Edward Graham caught glimpses of the stone wall with its wreaths of vine leaves, of the old wooden staircase clinging to the ancient house, of a broken shed, and an open stable-door, all no sooner seen than they vanished in darkness like that past which they brought back so vividly, and which had begun in hope and ended in disappointment.

"My dear boy! I am so glad!" said Mrs. Graham's cheery voice as he stepped down;

"you did so well to come, and your room is ready and supper waiting, and *are* you tired?"

And so, scarcely waiting for his answer, she went on talking as they ascended together the gloomy staircase which the young man knew so well, and entered the room in which the happiest dream and the saddest drama of his life had both come to their bitter end. But though he looked round him, Edward Graham felt a much older man than if last May had not seen his twenty-eighth birthday; he was not, and he had never been one to repine under the hard yoke of ill fortune. Bitterness he had felt, he could not help it, but he had never deigned to express it to strangers, nor had he grieved the only being who really loved him by allowing her to fathom the depths of his double disappointment. It was hard but inevitable that Mrs. Graham, who was shrewd in some things, but not always clear-sighted, should conclude that "Ned had never cared so very much for Lily Scot after all," and should not have feared for her nephew—as a wiser woman might—the dangerous proximity of his old love.

"And now will you have your supper up here?" she asked, as earnestly as if supper had

been the great object of Edward Graham's journey, "or will you take it below?"

"I dined in Dieppe, aunt, and, to tell you the truth, I want especially to know what Mr. Bertram said to you."

"Oh! he said nothing," cried Mrs. Graham, raising her eyebrows—"nothing at all, Ned, but that he wanted very much to see you and tell you something he could not possibly write about, and which would atone, and more than atone for all you had gone through."

Edward Graham looked at his watch. A quarter to eight; did his aunt think it was too late to call on Mr. Bertram?

"Oh! dear, no; he was most urgent in saying that you were to go at once to him, so you can just have some supper——"

"Thank you, auntie; but I shall go to him now, and——"

"But supper is ready—a roast fowl," said Mrs. Graham, looking dismayed; "you like a hot roast fowl."

"I like a cold one, too, aunt; besides, I must be home by the tenth," for a little professional business had delayed Edward Graham's journey to the last moment.

"You always were a wilful boy," retorted Mrs. Graham, provoked.

Edward Graham smiled, took his hat, went to the door, then, with his hand on the lock, paused and said,

"And how—how is Miss Scot, aunt?"

Mrs. Graham at once became grave and guarded.

"Oh! Lily is very well," she answered in a constrained voice. "Of course I had to tell her you were coming. I suppose you will call?"

Edward Graham did not answer.

"You wrote to me that she was on the verge of marriage with Richard Cowper; is it really so?"

"Oh! dear no," cried Mrs. Graham, looking half vexed. "It seems Mrs. Petherick was all wrong. I really begin to think that Mrs. Petherick does invent. Why, she told me the other day——"

"Dear auntie, I beg your pardon, but were you really mistaken?"

"Well, my dear boy, it is not an hour ago that Mrs. Scot declared she could not imagine what had put such an idea into my head, for that Mr. Cowper was the last man she would

give her daughter to, and that Mr. Lennard was a bear, if ever there was one. I fancy," added Mrs. Graham, rubbing her nose meditatively—"I really do, Ned, that Mr. Cowper expected his uncle to do something handsome for him when he married, and that Mr. Lennard objected to Lily's poverty. Mr. Cowper is gone no one knows where, and as Mrs. Petherick——"

"Oh! aunt," he cried, in a fever, "is Lily engaged, or has she been engaged, to Dick Cowper?—that is the question!"

"Certainly not," she triumphantly replied.

Edward Graham breathed freely—his dark eyes sparkled.

"Then if Mr. Bertram really means to give me compensation, if I can really recover my lost money," he said, his lips quivering with emotion.

"Of course," interrupted Mrs. Graham, impetuously. "I know what you mean. Of course you could marry the dear girl." She spoke with ardour equal to his own; and, with her usual imprudence, she added, "And, my dear Ned, I don't think she has forgotten you."

He could not speak. He was in a fever. He wrung her hand, and ran downstairs, and went

out into the dark streets of Saint Aubin to meet the dying man with a light heart. He was not colder or harder than other men, but he was still young, happiness was still much to him, and he was apt to forget what its cost might be to others.

With a troubled heart the young man left his aunt at the door of Mrs. Scot's house, and looking up at a light burning in one of the upper windows, he wondered if she who had once been his Lily cast that slender shadow on the muslin curtains. But strong though may be a man's love, a man's ambition in its failure or success is strong too, and when Edward Graham crossed the court of Mr. Bertram's house, and saw the evening sky, with its shining stars, where the turret—his turret—had once been, a mingled wrath and sorrow, in which Lily Scot had no part, filled his whole being, and for the time at least drove her image away. A strange servant-man let him in, and without even looking at his card, said at once that Monsieur was expecting Monsieur, and would Monsieur come upstairs.

Mr. Bertram's room was on the first-floor of the house. As the man admitted Edward

Graham, and having muttered a few words closed the door again, the young man's quick ear recognized the tones of Lily Bertram's voice on the stairs, saying in a half-whisper,

"Was that the doctor, Sévérin?"

"No, mam'selle, it is the Monsieur Anglais, and no one is to go in until——"

The rest of the answer was lost in the shutting of the door, and with this intimation that their conference was to be private and undisturbed, Edward Graham found himself alone in the presence of Mr. Bertram.

The room was large and lofty, and the shade on the lamp made it seem almost dark. Yet even from the door the whiteness of Mr. Bertram's face, as he sat motionless in a deep arm-chair, struck his visitor. It was as if death were gazing at him with that still look, and waiting for him to come near and question, and sat there calmly ready to unfold unto him tidings of that solemn world which is farther away from us than all the stars of all the spheres, and yet so near that one moment is enough to cross its awful brink.

"Mr. Graham, I believe," said Mr. Bertram, quite in his old manner, and that manner and his voice at once broke the spell. Imagination

was silenced. It was Mr. Bertram that Edward Graham looked at, and Mr. Bertram had something to say to him which might affect the whole of his future life.

"Pray be seated, Mr. Graham," resumed Mr. Bertram, in a low, languid voice. "You will excuse my rising, of course. I am ill—quite ill, as you have no doubt been told by Mrs. Graham. She was good enough to call and see me the other day, and I expressed to her my wish of having some conversation with you. I have had that wish a long time—a long time," repeated Mr. Bertram; "but I did not know how far circumstances would second my intentions—and some things cannot be put in writing."

He paused, and looked at Edward Graham, who remained silent. Mr. Bertram resumed, with something like subdued irritation—perhaps at not having been questioned—

"I always felt for you in that matter of the turret; it really was very hard upon you."

"Hard!" thought Edward Graham, knitting his dark brows.

"It was Mr. Lennard's doing. A bad man, Mr. Graham—a very bad man. You see how ill I am now. Well, sir, if my illness were to ter-

minate fatally, my child and all she has would actually be in that man's power. Monsieur Grandjean left all Miss Bertram's inheritance under Mr. Lennard's control, and actually appointed him her guardian in the event of my decease."

"You can appoint another guardian, Mr. Bertram," said Edward Graham. "Your authority is paramount."

"Of course," impatiently answered Mr. Bertram. "But if I do, there is no provision for Miss Bertram; and Mr. Lennard can actually refuse to make her any allowance out of her own property."

"There can be no court of law that would not compel him to do so," remarked Mr. Graham, a little indignantly.

"Very true," drily answered Mr. Bertram; "but perhaps you will kindly tell me, Mr. Graham, who is to take up my daughter's cause, and bring it before the courts of law?"

"Has Miss Bertram no relations?"

"None who would interfere. You may have heard that Monsieur Grandjean was a self-made man. His second or third cousins would certainly not trouble themselves about my

daughter's guardianship, especially as, in the event of her death, the money goes to charities."

Edward Graham silently wondered what he had to do with all this.

"I have only one way left to save my child," resumed Mr. Bertram, with a heavy sigh—"to place her under a husband's protection before I die."

The young man gave an involuntary start. At once he understood why Mr. Bertram had wished to see him, and had not cared to put down his intentions in writing; but though his face fell, he only made a quiet objection:

"Does marriage annul Mr. Lennard's authority over Miss Bertram's fortune?"

"Yes, sir," almost sharply rejoined Mr. Bertram. "Monsieur Grandjean, though wrong-headed in some things, had sense enough to leave the matter of Miss Bertram's marriage wholly to me. He knew that I only could understand and carry out Miss Bertram's position; and so her fortune, a handsome one, will be at her husband's disposal on her marriage day, subject, of course, to those guarantees on his part which prudence demands. I should

wish Miss Bertram's property to be settled on herself and her children. Such, too, was Monsieur Grandjean's wish. Indeed, I have a copy of his will here," he added, stretching out his hand to the drawer of a little bureau by his side.

"Excuse me," said Edward Graham, arresting him, "your word is enough. Besides——"

"A husband's authority over his wife's income is sufficient," interrupted Mr. Bertram, anticipating his meaning, as he thought; "quite right. Well, Mr. Graham, you know now and why I intend putting my daughter beyond the power of that unscrupulous man, whom I believe capable of forcing Miss Bertram into an uncongenial marriage with some needy relation of his own."

Edward Graham said not a word. He knew what was coming, and could wait.

"Such are my intentions," resumed Mr. Bertram in his lofty way, and he could not help waving his hand and flashing his diamond ring, "and you, Mr. Graham, are the man to whom I should wish to confide my daughter's happiness. That happiness, I need not say, has been my first thought, but I am also mindful

that this house—her house, has been the cause of some loss to you—loss of position and money. However, Miss Bertram's hand and fortune will more than atone for the past, and I know you, Mr. Graham, you are a gentleman by birth, a gentleman in feeling, and to you I can trust my child."

The young man leaned back in his chair and smiled, as with his glove he tightly tapped his knee.

So that was Mr. Bertram's atonement. He, Edward Graham, was to marry Lily, little slipshod Lily! And that was how, too, Mr. Bertram, even on the brink of the grave, combined love for his daughter, revenge on his false friend, and justice to the man whom he had wronged. The young man could have laughed at it all, it seemed so dreary and so hollow.

"Well, sir," said Mr. Bertram, bending forward as if to read his answer in his face, and speaking with a sick man's irritability, "have you apprehended my meaning? do you require time to consider, or can you oblige me with an immediate answer?"

"I require no time for consideration, Mr.

Bertram," answered Edward Graham, quietly, but somewhat sadly. "More than two years ago I was engaged to Miss Scot. You know how and why we parted. When I learned from my aunt that you had some scheme through which I might regain what I had lost, my secret hope in coming to hear you, was to find Miss Scot still free and as willing to renew our engagement as I was. After the proposal you have just made to me, that hope must perish as though it had never been. I thank you for the honour you have done me, but if you really wish to see Miss Bertram under the care of a husband, I cannot be that fortunate man."

There was just a touch of irony in the young man's voice as he uttered the last words, but Mr. Bertram, who looked at him in blank disappointment, did not seem even aware of this. He had lived in the worship of himself and his belongings for so many years, that he did not anticipate the young man's rejection of his daughter. True, Mr. Graham had liked Lily Scot once on a time, but that was over, and to prefer a bygone love to Miss Bertram seemed amazing to Miss Bertram's father. At the same time, that habit of chivalrous sentiment which Mr.

Bertram had cultivated all his life, tempted him to remark:

"Mr. Graham, I honour you for your fidelity, but allow me to ask you if it be wise? Miss Scot is lost to you; then ought you to reject such a chance as, I need not tell you, comes not twice in a man's lifetime?"

It was hard to hear this and not make some bitter reply, but all Edward Graham said was,

"Allow me to ask you if the man whose thoughts involuntarily turn to another woman, is the man you, Mr. Bertram, ought to wish your daughter to marry?"

"The man who marries Miss Bertram," began Lily's father in his grand old way, but a spasm which contracted his features with sudden pain, did not allow him to finish the sentence.

"Shall I ring the bell?" asked Mr. Graham, struck with the deathlike change in the sick man's aspect.

A wave of the hand, implying denial, was Mr. Bertram's only answer. After the silence of a few moments, during which his low, quick breathing was all that could be heard in the still room, he recovered and said,

"I hope I have not alarmed you. I am sub-

ject to these attacks, and very unpleasant they are. Well, Mr. Graham, I am sorry, for your sake, that we cannot come to an understanding. It is a pity; you had a chance—a rare chance, but it seems you cannot avail yourself of it. I regret it, also your disappointment. Miss Bertram, I need not say, will have no difficulty in finding one both able and willing to protect her; but time presses—my time may be short. Now what do you think of Mr. Cowper?" he added abruptly, "of course I am aware that Mr. Cowper is a man of honour and a gentleman, but what do you think of his temper and habits?"

Edward Graham could not answer at first. It was such a strange, sharp surprise to find Richard Cowper meeting him there too.

"Is Mr. Cowper free?" he asked at length.

"Quite free," was the dry answer, uttered in a tone which roused within Edward Graham the jealous suspicion that Richard Cowper had not always been considered "quite free," and that Mr. Bertram knew it. Had there been anything between him and Lily Scot, after all? If so, what more could he desire than to see him Lily Bertram's husband? But either be-

cause he had never liked Richard Cowper, or because he could not think without pity of a poor child given up to that selfish worldling, whose very good-humour sprang from heartlessness, he yielded to the impulse which prompted him to say vehemently:

"You cannot mean it, Mr. Bertram. Richard Cowper is idle; he has no profession, and no wish for one. He is older than I am, and he is Mr. Lennard's nephew."

"They are not friends now," coolly said Mr. Bertram, ignoring the other objections. "Mr. Lennard has behaved very badly to Mr. Cowper. He lured him over to Saint Aubin with false promises, and because Mr. Cowper would call upon me and pay me those marks of respect which I may say are my due, Mr. Lennard drove Mr. Cowper from him with contumely. My question to you, Mr. Graham, referred chiefly to Mr. Cowper's temper. Miss Bertram has always been very gently treated, and a sharp or imperative husband would make her very unhappy."

"Oh! Mr. Cowper is decidedly a good-tempered man," said Mr. Graham, drily.

"I am happy to hear you confirm my opin-

ion, Mr. Graham. All Mr. Lennard's preference is for that rough boy, who went to sea, and instead of staying there, unluckily came back the other day. If I were to die to-morrow, Mr. Graham, the man would force my child into a marriage with that rude youth; but Mr. Cowper he cannot endure."

"Poor little Lily!" thought Edward Graham —"no one who is not Mr. Lennard's enemy will suit your father."

Thus he thought, but he was silent. What could he say? He had come on a fruitless errand, renewed the old pain, and all in vain. The man before him was dying—he could see it in his face—and that man must leave his child—the child whom, spite his weakness and errors, he truly loved—in the power of his bitter enemy, of him who had brought some sorrow and more shame into his life. Mr. Graham pitied the father, but he pitied the daughter more, and with all his pity for these two he could not forget that his own lot was hard.

"Well, Mr. Graham, I will not detain you," said Mr. Bertram, after a pause; "if your mind should change——"

"It will not change, Mr. Bertram," was the grave but firm reply.

Mr. Bertram bent his head coldly, touched a silver hand-bell on the table, but did not hold out his hand to the man who had refused to become his son-in-law. A servant showed Mr. Graham downstairs. As he stood on the last step, with the open door before him, letting in the cool night air, and a glimpse of the starry sky, a low voice said behind him,

"Good night, Mr. Graham."

He turned round, and in the half gloom saw Lily Bertram, tall, slender, and pale. She gave him a weary, wistful look, then stole upstairs and vanished.

CHAPTER XIII.

"AND yet I must see her again before I leave this place," sadly thought Edward Graham, as he walked home to the Cité de Jérusalem with his hopes as low as flowers over which a strong wind has just passed; "it would be mean—it would be cowardly to shun her. It will be a keen pain to me—to her too, perhaps—and yet I must see her."

It would be hard, no doubt, but it would be sweet too. It would be a sorrow, but it would also be a joy; and though, as he went up the stairs of his room, the young man told himself he wished the meeting were well over, he thereby indulged in one of those bits of self-deception which are as the daily bread of our poor weak human hearts. To his surprise, he found Mrs. Graham and a cheerful supper-table both waiting for him.

"I could not let you have your cold supper after all," said Mrs. Graham, with her bright blue eyes beaming; "but you will have to see me home. And now sit down and eat, like a good boy."

"My kind old auntie," said he, laying his hand on her shoulder and looking down in her face with a smile.

Mrs. Graham had virtuously resolved not to put one question till "Ned, who must be starving, poor boy," had broken his fast; but now the temptation proved irresistible, and fastening her anxious eyes on her nephew's face, she uttered a "Well?" that was both comprehensive and interrogative.

"Well, auntie," said Edward Graham, sitting down to his supper and speaking with that calmness which it is part of a man's pride to wear through all the ills and troubles of life, "you would never guess what Mr. Bertram—who, by the way, is very ill, poor man—had to say to me, and what compensation he meant to give me for the past—he wanted me to marry Lily."

"To marry Lily!" repeated Mrs. Graham, amazed.

"Let us say Miss Bertram. Aunt, you must sup with me—here is a dainty bit of the breast for you. Yes, to marry Lily. He thought it a most excellent way of righting me, and cheating Mr. Lennard out of his authority over the poor child."

"I never heard anything like it," said Mrs. Graham, still amazed. Then suddenly laying down her knife and fork, she exclaimed with one of those abrupt transitions to which she was subject, "And yet do you know, Ned, it is a fine idea—it is a grand idea. Of course it would make everything right, for the house would be yours then, and you could build up the turret again; and Lily is a dear child, and Mr. Lennard is an odious old wretch——"

"Aunt," interrupted the young man, half vexed and half amused, "you cannot be serious, you cannot think that I could possibly marry Lily, little Lily!"

"Oh! but she has grown," ingeuuously remarked Mrs. Graham, looking at him, with simple earnestness in her guileless face—"she is a tall slip of a girl now."

Mr. Graham did not deign to argue the point. He drank off a glass of wine, made short work of

the leg of a fowl, then said, quite composedly,

"The poor child is some ten years younger than I am, to begin with."

"What about it, Ned?—that is nothing. My dear husband——"

"Aunt, aunt, is it so long ago since you hoped I might marry some one else?"

"My dear boy," said Mrs. Graham, rubbing her nose and looking perplexed, "I am very sorry for you, but since it can't be, I suppose it must not be; and I am afraid now it really is all over between you and Lily Scot, who is a dear girl, but not one to break her heart about it, you know; and as she and you are really parted——"

"We only parted because ruin stepped in between us," interrupted Edward Graham flushing red; "and if, instead of ruin, prosperity had come, why should we not have remembered the old love?"

Mrs. Graham looked more perplexed than ever.

"Well, but it has not come," she argued; "and—and I am sorry to pain you, my dear boy, but I fear Miss Scot's feelings have undergone a change."

Mr. Graham's colour fled, but he tried to smile as he said, "How so?"

"Well, after you and I parted this evening, Mr. Lennard's nephew came in to see Mrs. Scot —that lad who went to sea, you know—and he seemed to me very sweet upon Lily; and I really think she did not dislike it."

Mr. Graham winced, but he laughed and said "That boy!" seeming more amazed than indignant.

"He is quite a man now," argued Mrs. Graham; "and Mrs. Petherick's theory is that Mr. Lennard must do something to get back into society; and that though, when it came to the point, he did not choose to part with his money for Mr. Cowper, who is not his nephew at all, I believe, he may do so for young Lennard, his brother's son, who came back in the nick of time, and give him something handsome if he marries Lily."

Perhaps of all the proofs that Lily Scot was really lost to him, his no more, Edward Graham could have received none more convincing than the fashion after which Mrs. Petherick, and his aunt even, disposed of her in favour of other men. Richard Cowper, William Lennard, too,

now could woo the girl who had once been all his. True they had parted, true his claim had been relinquished, but even when love dies there is a jealousy which survives it, and when love only slumbers because of much sorrow, ready to waken at the first touch of joy, jealousy is ever with it, whether hidden or confessed. A thrill of sharp, angry pain shot through the veins of the young man, but he only laughed as if in derisive amusement, and said,

"Well, aunt, what is all that to me?"

"Don't I say so!" argued Mrs. Graham, opening her eyes at his dulness. "And that is why you really might marry Lily Bertram."

"Yes, aunt, but I never will."

"You might do worse," said Mrs. Graham, nodding at him across the table. "She is a dear, good, warm-hearted child, to begin with!"

"But would she like it, to begin with?" said he smiling.

"I always thought she was rather partial to you," remarked Mrs. Graham, with her usual candour; "and I feel sure that if you say yea to Mr. Bertram's proposal, Lily will not say nay."

Edward Graham heard her impatiently. What did he care for Lily Bertram's yea or nay? The fair, calm face, the soft, dark eyes of Lily Scot passed before him in the half gloom of the room, alluring him very sweetly, though, alas!—and he felt it—very vainly.

Mrs. Graham pursued, a little dreamily, and still rubbing her nose with her forefinger, a trick she had when she was either perplexed or abstracted:

"You see, Ned, life is a very odd thing, full of puzzles, and the oddest changes. Lily Scot is a dear, good girl, but I fancy she has given you up more entirely than I thought, or else she likes that young man, which I had no idea of an hour ago. Yes, life is like a fine piece of Eastern work which I saw once on a time! Oh! it was such a piece of work, all the colours of the rainbow were in it, I do believe, and there was a gold thread that ran through, and made it the handsomest thing I ever saw; but I have always heard that the Eastern people are full of whims. The workman had broken off the gold thread in one part of his woof, and I cannot say that he had improved it. Well, my dear boy, there is, I believe, such a gold thread in every

man's life, and it is the girl or the woman whom he loves, or ought to love. I did think Lily Scot was the girl for you, but my sight is dim—she may not have been your thread of gold, after all! I fancy there is a higher strain in that little Lily Bertram than you will find in ninety-nine women out of a hundred. Take care, Ned, that when you reject her you do not cut off the gold thread in the pattern of your life!"

Edward Graham, who was filling his glass, smiled as he raised it to his lips.

"I like your gold thread, aunt," he said, leaning back in his chair; "but marry a crude, raw girl, not for the Tower of Babel could I do it."

"Ah! not for that only," cried the old lady, with glistening eyes. "Think of the youth and the innocence! Why, you would be like Adam with his Eve, a dear young thing all your own, to make what you would like of. I wonder it does not tempt you."

And tempted Mr. Graham was for one moment. Yes, that vision of a fresh virgin heart was bewitching, but the thought of Lily Bertram, with her tangled hair, and her slip-shod

feet, banished it as surely as ever evil fairy's wand transformed the beautiful princess into the unsightly peasant girl.

"Dear old auntie," he thought, with a smile and a sigh, "her good, kind face may get as wrinkled as a sweet russet apple, her heart will ever be tender, fresh and young!"

"But it does not tempt you, and that gold thread is not to be your gold thread, after all," said Mrs. Graham, with a sigh. "It can't be helped, but 'tis a pity, Ned, 'tis a pity. And now what will you do?"

"Go back to London after to-morrow morning, auntie," he answered, trying to speak cheerfully, "and take you with me, if you will come."

"Perhaps I will, Ned; indeed, I have a great mind to go with you. Yes, I really think I will; indeed, I am quite determined, so that is settled. I suppose you will call on Mrs. Scot to-morrow?"

Mr. Graham gravely answered that he would certainly call on Mrs. Scot; and as it was late by this, he again saw Mrs. Graham home. They did not speak much on the way. They both felt disappointed. Mrs. Graham thought rue-

fully that she had done more harm than good, and Edward Graham, little though he had hoped, knew now how much that little had been to him.

No moon lit the long, silent street in which Mrs. Scot lived, and though gas was now extended to that portion of Saint Aubin, it was sparingly distributed, and lanterns were still used there at night by the timid. As Edward Graham and his aunt neared the door of Mrs. Scot's house, the will-o'-the-wisp light of a lantern came dancing towards them.

"Why, that is Mrs. Petherick," said Mrs. Graham, in her clear, frank voice.

"Of course it is," answered Mrs. Petherick's cheerful accents; "and that is really Mrs. Graham out at this time of night! And Mr. Graham too! Well, Captain Jekyll *did* say you were in the place; but I confess I thought it was one of his usual inventions. I am glad to find that Captain Jekyll can say the truth at times. Of course you know the sad news?" she added, with a sudden change of accent, and turning to Mrs. Graham as she spoke. "What! not know them? I thought it was over all Saint Aubin by this. Poor Mr. Bertram died

suddenly ten minutes ago. A spasm, you know. Doctor Bellington always said he would go off in a moment. It seems he was talking to poor little Lily Bertram about her cuffs. 'I do wish you would not wear such long cuffs,' he was saying; 'it is ridiculous.' 'They are not very long, papa,' says the child. 'They are ridiculous!' says Mr. Bertram, who had grown rather cross of late; 'and I desire——' At that word the spasm came, and it was all over. As Mrs. Montague says, it really was like a judgment on the poor man for the words 'I desire.' People never should talk so, says Mrs. Montague."

"Oh, the child—the poor child!" cried Mrs. Graham, bursting into sudden tears. "Oh! Ned, Ned, ain't you sorry? She is all alone now—all alone! No father to take care of her! All alone!"

And Mrs. Graham, spite her seventy years, wept freely.

Mr. Graham did not answer. He was a young soldier still in the great battle of life, not used to see his fellow-combatants drop down by his side; and he felt shocked and awed. That pitiless philosophy which life forces upon us, that teacher whose voice is more subtle and pene-

trating, deeper and more impressive than that of any preacher, spoke to him then. What was life when man's hold upon it was so brief? Ten minutes ago this man was talking about his daughter's cuffs, and now he had left that daughter for ever; and however hard or bitter her fate might be, he could not raise a finger to protect or defend her. He had left that sweet present, which we call life, for the shadowy future of death. He was nothing now, unless in the speech of the men and women who had survived him. They would comment on his trivial words, on his foibles of temper, on his illness, on his goods and chattels, on his child, take them up in turns for a moment, then drop them down again and let them be, and Mr. Bertram and his living presence and his memory would all drift down the swift tide of Time, and vanish there from human ken for evermore. Oh! what was life, and what was love, even though it wore the fair face of Lily Scot! And ambition, with her promises, and her sculptured turrets, as frail as a child's house of cards, which a breath can lay low—what were they that a man should ever have given them thought and passionate desires?

"Well, well, it is sad," resumed Mrs. Petherick, with a conventional sigh. "Good night, Mrs. Graham; good night, Mr. Graham;" and, preceded by Marie, the Norman girl, who carried the lantern, she went down the street with light and nimble steps.

"Good night, Ned," said Mrs. Graham, with a heavy sigh. "You need not knock. I hear them coming."

Low laughing voices were approaching from within the house, a light flashed through the chinks of the door which suddenly flew open, a tall young man stepped out into the street, before he passed into the gloom, the light fell on his face, and Edward Graham knew him in a moment. He knew, too, the slender figure half bending in the darkness of the archway and the voice which said softly,

"Good night, William."

"Good night, aunt," quietly said Edward Graham as he walked away.

He had spoken very calmly, but jealousy, sudden, keen, and irresistible, had stung him, and, alas! with that sting fled all the philosophy, all the indifference to life and love which Mr. Bertram's death had called up.

"Why, that's Mr. Graham!" said Louisa, peering out after him in the darkness of the street. "He should have had a light."

"As if he did not know the way to the house!" cried Jane, with unconscious irony on the past.

"I am sorry he did not come in," said Lily in a low tone.

"Shall I go and call him back?" asked William Lennard with fierce politeness.

"He will come to-morrow," innocently remarked Mrs. Graham; "and it is late, and the dreadful news have upset us. Was not Mrs. Petherick here? Did she not tell you?"

But Mrs. Petherick had not been there and they knew nothing, and were sobered and silenced out of all petty gossip and foolish jealousy by the tale which Mrs. Graham had to tell.

"Poor Lily, poor child," softly said Miss Scot, "I think I will go in to her."

And walking out into the street she knocked at the next door, which opened and let her within, what all Saint Aubin had once called so emphatically Mr. Bertram's house.

CHAPTER XIV.

MANY changes had taken place in Saint Aubin of which Mr. Graham knew nothing —trivial changes, some of which, however, were to tell on the whole of his future life. One of these was that Miss Scot had ceased to teach Lily Bertram. To Miss Scot herself Mr. Bertram had declared with his usual courtesy that the loss of her tuition was an irreparable one for Miss Bertram, but that his unfortunate illness left him no choice, he must have his daughter's constant society and so forth. Unluckily some good soul had taken care to tell Mrs. Scot that Miss Scot's ignorance of music was his real motive for the change. Mrs. Scot's amazed and dignified displeasure on hearing this exceeded all bounds. Poor Mr. Bertram! illness must surely have affected his brain for him to have

such absurd fancies. Why, it was only to oblige him that she had allowed her daughter to give so much of her time to his, and it was quite a relief to get Lily back again. And so it came to pass that Lily was no more Miss Bertram's daily companion, and that polite coolness had sprung up between the two households. Mrs. Scot sent in formal inquiries concerning Mr. Bertram's health, and Mr. Bertram sent back formal thanks for Mrs. Scot's kindness, but the old friendship seemed to have ebbed all away, and it was only the sudden calamity that had befallen her former pupil which now induced Lily Scot to cross the once familiar threshold. Hers was not, however, the first visit which that bereaved house received, and as she passed by the open dining-room door, Miss Scot was a little startled to see Mr. Lennard sitting there alone with a lamp burning dimly on the table, and papers scattered before him. He looked up on hearing her light footstep, and beckoned her within.

"Thank you for coming, Miss Scot," he said, composedly. "I was going to send for you. I really think you are the only person who can manage that foolish child upstairs. She has

refused to see me. It will do for to-night, but to-morrow she must know better. Will you kindly explain to her that I am her guardian—that is to say, her master. If her father has left a will, and she knows something about it, she had better say so. It would be more pleasant if the responsibility of the funeral did not rest upon me. Of course in this country it must take place after to-morrow. *Will* you kindly explain all that to her, Miss Scot. Excuse the trouble I give you," he added, after a brief pause, "but I hope that you will soon take her once more under your care."

"I shall give your message to Miss Bertram," answered Miss Scot, rather coldly.

"And the rest may remain in abeyance, eh?" quickly retorted Mr. Lennard. "Well, well, we shall see. But do oblige me by dropping that Miss Bertram—it is absurd, you know—quite absurd."

Lily did not answer, but her quiet and silent face held forth little encouragement. Mr. Lennard was held at arm's length, and he knew it.

"Sorry you don't agree with me about the Miss Bertram," said he, drily; "and I will not

detain you. By the way, was William with you this evening?"

Miss Scot steadily replied that Mr. William Lennard had been at her mother's house that evening, and when Mr. Lennard drily retorted, "Ah! I thought so," she gazed at him very calmly. That he had warned off Richard Cowper she knew, just as his perverse hate for the dead man had ruined all her hopes more than two years ago. If he chose to warn off William Lennard now, after having tolerated, or seemed to tolerate, the young man's first visits, she must bear it; but surely they were not so low that Mr. Lennard should think he could bribe them with the situation of Miss Bertram's governess.

"And yet what a blessing and what a loss that has been!" thought poor Lily Scot, as she went upstairs with a sigh.

Lily Bertram was locked up in her room, and it was only on hearing Lily Scot's voice that she opened the door and let her in. Her face was pale, her eyes were red, her hair was dishevelled —she had been lying on her bed, giving herself up to grief with the utter abandonment of youth's first sorrow. She clasped her arms

around Lily's neck, and laid her head on the shoulder of her friend, but she did not speak. With gentle words and tender caresses Miss Scot did her best to soothe that silent grief. She did not attempt direct consolation, but she suggested all that could soften a blow so cruel and so sudden; and she also gave some wise counsel. Lily Bertram heard her for some time, then looked up and sighed,

"No, Lily dear," she said sadly, "you mean well, but it can't be. I can't submit to dear papa's enemy. Besides," she added, with another sigh, "I shall not stay in Saint Aubin. Dear papa wrote to Miss Cowper to know if she could not take care of me, and she has answered very kindly, so I shall go to her. Dear papa —the letter came by this evening's post, and he said Miss Cowper *was* a lady; and—and I shall go to her," said Lily, with a quivering lip.

"My dear, do not delude yourself, Mr. Lennard is your guardian, and he will not permit it."

"But my papa wishes it!" cried Lily; "and shall I not obey my papa, and not Mr. Lennard? Besides, to live with him—no, I never could bear *that!*"

Miss Scot looked at the poor girl and sighed over her ignorance. She had borne so many things in her young life, things very hateful in their way, but Lily Bertram had never had anything to bear, and could talk in that foolish fashion.

"Mr. Lennard may let you stay with us for awhile," she suggested; "but I do not think he will allow you to go to Miss Cowper's, in England."

"Then I shall run away," said Lily, with much determination. "Shall I not obey papa, who is so kind and good? Is—ah!—*is* is over now for ever and ever—it is *was* for ever and ever too. Oh! papa, my darling!" she cried, with a sudden and wild burst of grief, "are you dead?—are you dead indeed?"

She thought no more of herself, of Mr. Lennard, of what she could bear or could not; she forgot all save the bitter and terrible fact that her father was dead!

He had been a very weak man; his assumption of a name not his own—and Lily knew that now, and it had been a cruel blow to her integrity and her pride—had been worse than weakness; but she loved him with the clinging,

passionate love of a daughter for her father; she would not see his failings, and she even felt a sort of righteous wrath against those whom she suspected of being more clear-sighted than herself. He was not a Bertram, but he ought to have been one, and for his sake she would be called a Bertram; and he was her own amiable, accomplished father—the best, the dearest, the first of men. So her love, spite a sad shock, had remained strong, and as her love had been, so was her grief. She flung herself across the bed in a transport of sorrow, and clasping her hands above her head, she sobbed with something like despair. Miss Scot was looking at her in silent pity, when the door of the room opened, and her mother came in. Nothing could be more foreign to Mrs. Scot's self-indulgent habits than to stir from her sofa at this late hour, but such startling news as she had just received was enough to rouse her. It seemed as if the death of Mr. Bertram invested Mrs. Scot with sudden importance, and with the urgent desire to do something or other. She forgot that she was very poorly—that she really could not stir.

"I must go and see about it," said she to her

two younger daughters; "the poor absurd child cannot be left alone. We must have her here." So Mrs. Scot went, and though somewhat sobered when she found Mr. Lennard in possession, she yet got on pretty well with Miss Bertram's guardian, and went up to her room armed with a certain portion of his authority, and full of the best intentions.

"My dear child," said Mrs. Scot, decisively, and in that domineering tone which people instinctively assume towards other people in trouble, as if they had become a sort of public property—"my dear child, you must not go on so. I have been talking to Mr. Lennard, and you are to come to us at once. Mr. Lennard agrees with me that it is the only proper thing for you, so I have told Marie to pack up a few things for you, and Sarah will get a little supper ready—a bit of chicken, dear, and a little salad—and you must not take on so. It is a great trouble, to be sure," added Mrs. Scot, with a sigh, "but your poor papa would not like to see you in *that* way, I am sure, and it is a sort of flying in the face of Providence as well."

Miss Bertram raised her head slowly, and

looked at Mrs. Scot with a grave surprise, verging on austere displeasure.

"Thank you, Mrs. Scot," she said coldly; "you are kind, and you mean well, but I shall not leave this house whilst—whilst my dear father is in it."

Mrs. Scot stared at her, then at her daughter, then at Miss Bertram again, and at length she said—

"Is the child crazy?"

"Oh, no," Miss Bertram answered, with much dignity, "I am not mad at all, Mrs. Scot, and I am so much obliged to you, for you mean it kindly, I know; but I do not mean to leave my house whilst my dear father is in it, and since you and Mr. Lennard have been talking it over," she added, emphatically, "perhaps you will kindly tell him so."

She spoke quietly, with a determination which was a whole revelation of unsuspected strength to Miss Scot, but which Mrs. Scot, who failed to understand that Mr. Bertram's daughter had suddenly leaped from childish youth into early womanhood, interpreted as too monstrous not to be a form of insanity.

"Poor little thing!" she murmured, tapping

her forehead as she looked at her daughter; "but we can't leave her here, you know, Lily."

"I am sorry you don't understand, Mrs. Scot," said Miss Bertram, with a weary sigh, "but Lily does—explain it all, Lily dear," she added, sinking back on the bed, and laying her head on her pillow, she closed her eyes like one who had done with all save grief.

Mrs. Scot did understand, and was nettled, not to say affronted.

"Lily, my dear, we are in the way," she said, stiffly. "I think we had better leave Miss Bertram. She knows that whenever she wants us we are at her command."

"Thank you, Mrs. Scot," said Lily Bertram, without raising her head or opening her eyes. "I know you mean very kindly. Good night, Lily dear. Thank you both for coming."

And thus, and most unsatisfactorily, the interview ended. Mrs. Scot, indeed, was much displeased, and talked all the way downstairs about the absurdity of young people now-a-days.

"No managing the young lady, Mr. Lennard," she observed, as she passed by the open door of the dining-room, where Mr. Lennard was still

poring over papers, with the light of the lamp falling full on his little bilious face and bald forehead.

"I suppose not," he said, drily. "Lily,"—and he beckoned her in—"what about the will?"

"I know nothing, Mr. Lennard," she answered, coldly. "The poor child is very much overcome, and I did not put the question."

"And so she would not go with you!" he remarked, with one of his boring looks. "I wonder what the little vixen intends doing?"

Lily was silent. She saw no need to tell Mr. Lennard about Miss Cowper's letter and Lily Bertram's intentions.

"What did Mr. Lennard say to you?" asked Mrs. Scot, as her daughter joined her at the arched gateway which opened into the street. "The will? He asked *you* about the will? Well, I am sure! To ask *you* about the will, when *I* was there!"

In vain Lily mentioned that Mr. Lennard's question had already been put before her mother's arrival, Mrs. Scot scorned the explanation, and laughed disdainfully in the silent street.

"The way of the world, my dear," she said, as she entered her own house. "Once a woman is past thirty she is nobody; but I can tell Mr. Lennard what he is," added the indignant lady, unconsciously falling into that scorn of age with which she reproached Mr. Lennard, "he is an ill-mannered old bear!"

Mr. Bertram having died in the evening, the funeral could not take place the next day, but was put off to the morning following this.

"Ned, I should like to stay till the poor gentleman is buried, if you do not mind waiting for me," said Mrs. Graham, with a wistful look in her nephew's face.

"To be sure, auntie," he cheerfully replied. The delay was not much to his liking, but he would not have failed to please his kind old auntie for almost anything in the world.

"I suppose you will come in and see Mrs. Scot to-day?" continued Mrs. Graham.

"Not to-day, aunt. I shall go to Chanzy, and try to see Merle the builder."

"Ah! to be sure," remarked Mrs. Graham, whose face cleared in a manner that showed she had rather dreaded the interview with Lily Scot.

"I do not mean to call more than once," resumed Mr. Graham, "and that can be after the funeral."

"Then you do mean to go to the funeral?" cried Mrs. Graham, whose blue eyes glistened. "My dear boy, it is noble! I am so glad!"

Her nephew smiled at her ardour.

"Yes, the man wronged me cruelly," said he, "but he would have atoned if he could, and I have no right to forget that."

Mr. Graham was disappointed in his journey to Chanzy. Monsieur Merle was at Vilaine, three leagues off.

"But he will be near Saint Aubin to-morrow, and I am sure he will call on you," eagerly said Madame Merle, whose fresh, comely face was beaming with pleasure at seeing that Monsieur Graham, of whose honourable conduct her husband was never weary of speaking.

"I shall be glad to see Monsieur Merle again," said Mr. Graham, with perfect sincerity, and he walked back to Saint Aubin in the greyness of evening.

The funeral took place early the next morning. Saint Aubin expected that Mr. Bertram would be buried in the old Abbey of Saint Aubin

sur dun. There was room for him in the vault where his mother and his reputed father slept. Mr. Lennard chose to settle matters otherwise.

"I am not a scion of the aristocracy, thank heaven!" he said, with a sneer; "but I do not fancy having all the Bertram stock on my back. And what would they say if they found a Jones among them? No, Mr. Jones shall lie as nigh to his father-in-law, the drysalter, as can be. He married the man's daughter, and cannot expect better company. If he wanted to be elsewhere, he should have made his will and said so."

The late Monsieur Grandjean's grave was in the old cemetery of Saint Aubin sur dun; and there, spite the distance, the funeral took place. Edward Graham followed it unasked—not from curiosity, for he felt none, nor yet from respect, for he had been too deeply wronged to forget it—but because Mr. Bertram had offered him his daughter in marriage. He wanted to save her from Mr. Lennard—no doubt he also wanted to be revenged upon his enemy; but with these feelings there had mingled a trust in Mr. Graham's honour, and a wish to atone for the past,

which the young man acknowledged in the only way now left to him. He abstained, however, as far as he could, from mingling with the friends and acquaintances of the deceased, and lingered purposely in the rear.

Mr. Bertram had no relations in Saint Aubin; his daughter was ill with fatigue and grief, and Mr. Lennard followed the hearse as chief mourner. If he did it to show the little world of Saint Aubin that he triumphed in death over the man whom he had wronged in life, he paid dear for his victory. Looks full of irony, emphatic whispers, indignant though muttered exclamations, followed him from the house to the church, from the church to the cemetery, as surely as he followed the coffin of his injured friend. Mr. Lennard was not a patient man; he glanced at his tormentors, and set his teeth and clenched his hands with suppressed passion; and once, as he stood by the grave, he looked so like a wild beast at bay, so ready to turn and break through all conventional restraints into fury and scandal, that a great hush fell on the crowd, and the coffin was lowered in peace.

But the worst for the guilty man came when,

all being over, the mourners dispersed. Mr. Bertram had been a popular man; many followed him to his last rest; they had not esteemed him, but they had liked him; and though, as they all went away, none could celebrate his virtues, everyone had a kind word for his amiable and pleasing qualities. But the people who thus formed into groups to utter the praises of the dead, kept aloof from the living. Mr. Lennard walked alone, shunned by all, and scowling fiercely at his enemies. Suddenly his little keen eyes singled out one, and at the sight of him his whole being seemed to swell with passion and wrath. Stepping across a grave, he went up to him and stared up in his face.

"Well, sir?" he said.

Mr. Graham looked down at Mr. Lennard with mingled indifference and contempt, then turned away, without even deigning to resent his insolent and aggressive tone by so much as a word.

CHAPTER XV.

"THE old boy got enough of it," said Captain Jekyll with a suppressed "ha! ha!"

But Mr. Graham to whom this overture was addressed, responded so coldly and so briefly that the Captain drew away from him with an affronted look, and muttering something about beggars and impudence, passed his arm within that of Doctor Billington, with whom he maintained a confidential discourse until they were on the road of Saint Aubin. No one else cared to address Mr. Graham. He had passed out of the life of Saint Aubin, and though he was unaware of it, his aspect was stern and forbidding. The remembrance of the bitter past—and every step he took forbade him to forget—might be the cause of this; perhaps, too, the presence of William Lennard—tall, handsome,

though rather sulky-looking, added to the bitterness of that past, and stung him in love, which was not all dead, and in pride, which never dies.

The day was grey and cloudy, and the little cemetery where Mr. Graham was soon left alone had a sad and desolate aspect. Yet he lingered there, walking amongst those unknown graves, drawn by that mysterious impulse which binds the living to the dead, till a soft rain began to fall, warning him to depart. On his way to the entrance-gate, he passed near the spot where Mr. Bertram had just been buried, and looking at it saw Lily turning away from the mound beneath which lay, not merely all that she had loved, but also all that had loved her. She saw Mr. Graham, and looking at him said,

"Mr. Lennard locked me up, but I came all the same. Mr. Lennard put him here, but he shall not stay here, Mr. Graham."

And she moved on swiftly, giving him no time to reply, and leaving him struck with the pale strength of her silent face and tearless eyes. Nigh the gate he saw her joined by Marie, who came breathless and limping as if she had hurried to overtake her young mis-

tress. Some scolding, too, she seemed to indulge in, but Miss Bertram did not appear to heed her. She went on like a silent vision through the falling rain, and Mr. Graham looking after them till they vanished, slowly left the place and took away with him a picture of the cloistered cemetery with its grass-grown graves and its roof of grey sky, of the pale silent girl and brown old Marie in her trim skirts and white cap talking and nodding unheeded.

In the afternoon Mr. Graham called on Mrs. Scot. Mrs. Scot received him kindly, and regretted that her daughter was not at home. But perhaps Mr. Graham would do them the favour of taking a dish of tea with them that evening when Mrs. Scot's daughter would certainly be within, and they would all unite their efforts in persuading him to remain, and thereby leave them, dear Mrs. Graham, at least, a few days longer. All this Mrs. Scot said very graciously. She guessed that William Lennard would come in that evening. She was not sorry to stimulate him with the presence of his predecessor. It would also do Mr. Graham good—he had always been conceited—to find

that Lily had found a comforter. Mr. Graham accepted the invitation. It was a great weakness surely. He had called on Mrs. Scot as politeness required, but what need was there to see Lily again? and yet he yielded to temptation, declaring to his own thoughts that, though the interview might lead to some pain, it would be unmanly of him to shrink from it.

And so in the evening that door, the threshold of which he had thought never to cross again, opened for him. Once more he saw that drawing-room to which the presence of Lily Scot had given its charm. And she was there again—sweet, fair, gentle as ever! Jane and Louisa had shot up into tall demure girls, but their elder sister was unaltered. Neither time nor sorrow had dimmed her eyes nor faded her cheek, nor changed her smile. With a little blush she held out her hand and welcomed him who had been her betrothed husband. She did not look annoyed, but neither did she look glad. Lily was too self-possessed, too lady-like to betray either feeling; she was courteous and friendly, that was all. Indeed, the blush we have recorded and which made Edward Graham's heart leap as he noticed it, was so evanes-

cent that his own emotion quickly subsided. "It was the lamplight that deceived me," he thought, "it is all over for her—better so—yes, better so."

No doubt it was better—but better is not always pleasant; and Mr. Graham was just a little hurt at Lily's self-possession, though he did his best to emulate it. The party was not a lively one. Mrs. Graham had gone to bed with a bad headache, but still persisted in her resolve of going away with her nephew the next day. This Mrs. Scot chose to resent as an unpardonable wrong. Her displeasure, however, had another cause. William Lennard was not coming, and would not be stimulated by Edward Graham, nor give the said Edward the lesson in humility he so sadly needed. That he might not lose, however, the entire benefit of the young man's devotion to her daughter, Mrs. Scot took care to wonder at his absence.

"I thought William said last night he would be sure to come," she remarked, rather severely.

Lily, who was pouring out Mr. Graham's tea —never did cup of tea taste more unpalatable than this—answered with great composure,

"He cannot come, mamma—his uncle wants him."

"Just like his perversity," said Mrs. Scot, shutting her eyes with the resignation of a martyr.

Tea was barely over when Mrs. Petherick came in, lively as ever, and breathless with news.

"And have you really been taking your tea in that quiet fashion, when all Saint Aubin is in a turmoil?" she exclaimed, sinking down on a chair and clasping her hands in amazement.

"News!—what news?" asked Mrs. Scot, with sudden liveliness.

"I thought to find Captain Jekyll here, telling you all about it. I suppose he is at the Randolphs."

"Well, but what news?" asked Mrs. Scot, tartly.

"Oh! about that unfortunate child, of course. Instead of being overwhelmed with grief, as one would suppose, little Miss Bertram has displayed the most terrible temper. I hear that she actually clung to the door-posts as she cried, 'I will not leave my house—I will not leave it—never!—never!' 'Come along, Miss Jones,' says

Mr. Lennard—'no nonsense, you must come and live with me now, you know. I am your guardian, Miss Jones.' 'I am Miss Bertram, not Miss Jones,' says the young lady, drawing herself up; 'and I will die before I go and live with you—you bad man, who broke dear papa's heart!' 'Your papa, Miss Jones, had complaint of the heart, Miss Jones,' retorts Mr. Lennard. He *is* spiteful, I must say. 'It was in the Jones family, no doubt, and what have I, who am not a Jones, to do with that?' And when Mr. Lennard added in his wicked way, 'Don't make me take you away by force,' little Miss Bertram, or Miss Jones, I am sure I don't know which to call her, turned as white as a ghost, and followed him without a word."

"Poor child!" said Lily Scot, gently.

"Mr. Lennard is a horrid bear!" cried Mrs. Scot, with evident temper; "and I wish that Mr. Bertram—well, Sarah, what is it?"

The question was put to Sarah Webster, who stood in the door with tragedy in her sallow face.

"If you please, ma'am, Miss Bertram would like to speak to you. She won't come in; but she would like to speak to you."

"The little unfortunate has run away!" cried Mrs. Petherick, turning up her eyes and raising her hands.

"Tell Miss Bertram that I am going up to her presently," answered Mrs. Scot, with a look of much dignity; "and take her up a cup of tea in my room, nurse."

"My dear Mrs. Scot, you will get yourself in a mess with Mr. Lennard," said Mrs. Petherick.

"My dear Mrs. Petherick," austerely replied Mrs. Scot, rising from the sofa and sailing to the door, "Mr. Lennard may lock up his ward if he pleases—I shall not shut my door on Mr. Bertram's daughter."

A cruel alternative now lay before Mrs. Petherick. Should she go and spread this last fresh bit of news, or wait for more? If she went she would certainly forestall Captain Jekyll. If she waited she might lose that chance; but then she would also learn a great deal which she could never learn so well otherwise. The advantage of waiting was too great. Mrs. Petherick remained.

No one spoke much till Mrs. Scot returned; Jane and Louisa exchanged uneasy whispers; Mrs. Petherick uttered a word now and then,

and nodded more than she spoke ; and Edward Graham looked at Lily, who gazed pensively before her, and seemed to have forgotten him. And yet her eyes lit softly, and—he was sure of it—her cheek flushed, as a man's voice mingled with her mother's nigh the parlour door ; but when that door opened, and Mrs. Scot came in, followed by William Lennard, Lily was herself again, and she greeted the visitor with the cold gentleness which she gave to all.

"Very well, William, tell Mr. Lennard that he may come if he pleases," remarked Mrs. Scot, as she walked back to her sofa with much stateliness. "Miss Bertram is here. I do not deny it. She is lying down in my room—very much exhausted, poor little thing! I shall never close my door against her father's child, William!"

William Lennard heard Mrs. Scot with a lowering aspect which did not improve his good looks. He darted an angry glance at Mr. Graham, as if he held him responsible for all this and replied, with decided ill-humour,

"Well, look you here, Mrs. Scot. What right has the little monkey to run away from us? I stayed at home this evening to keep her com-

pany, and she went up to her room and gave us the slip."

"She came to her father's friend," said Mrs. Scot, still dignified.

Perhaps it was to create a diversion that Lily Scot here asked William if he would have some tea; but with another irate look at Mr. Graham, as if to say, "I will have no tea, because he has had some," the young man uttered an ungracious, "No, thank you;" adding, in the same breath,

"I made her tea myself, and she would not touch it—bad-tempered little thing!"

"She never could bear you, William," mischievously put in Jane.

"Then there's no love lost between us," said William, turning scarlet. "A little set-up thing. She can be nice, no one nicer, but she is as proud as Lucifer! And yet, for all uncle could say or do, I would not call her Jones. Ungrateful monkey!"

"You always were fond of her," persisted Jane, demurely.

William shot an angry look at her.

"I—I fond of her?" said he, stammering with annoyance. "What do you mean?"

"Nothing," interrupted Lily Scot, a little drily, and she looked severely at her sister, who was silenced.

Mr. Graham rose. He felt sadly out of place. He could not but see that William Lennard's good or ill-humour seemed more to Lily Scot now than his presence. It might be just, nay, it might be desirable; but when he remembered the secret hope with which he had come to Saint Aubin, it was hard. So he took his leave of them all coldly enough, till Lily Scot, looking at him with sudden softness, said gently,

"Will you not stay? Perhaps Mrs. Graham will come down presently. And shall we not see you again to-morrow?" she timidly added.

"Oh! certainly," he replied, relenting at once, and hoping that Mrs. Scot would say something to detain him; but Mrs. Scot, who did not like her daughter's gentle and friendly manner, was coldly silent. Indeed, as soon as the door of the parlour had closed upon him, she exclaimed, a little crossly,

"I never did see a man so altered as Mr. Graham!"

"He is quite old," assented Mrs. Petherick.

"I wonder what brought him to Saint Aubin?"

grumbled William Lennard, ill-temperedly. "I don't suppose anyone wanted him."

Mrs. Graham's sudden entrance put an end to all comments.

"What! he's gone!" she cried; adding, with her usual candour, "and it was for him I came down."

"Nurse can soon overtake and bring him back," said Lily Scot, with what William considered very unnecessary alacrity.

Edward Graham had almost reached the limits of the Haute-ville, when Lily's gipsy-looking nurse overtook him, and delivered his aunt's message. He turned back willingly enough, hoping to see Lily's face once more, and he was certainly disappointed when he was shown into the dining-room, where Mrs. Graham sat waiting for him alone.

"My dear boy," said she, as soon as she saw him, "I could not sleep without telling you. Shut the door, and don't breathe a word of it. Little Lily Bertram wants to run away to England with me."

"Impossible!" said Edward Graham, with a start of surprise.

"My dear Ned, she has just been in my room,

and coaxed and prayed till—till I have a great mind to do it."

"Aunt, you surely would not!"

Mr. Graham loved the law. *Dura lex sed lex*, was his creed. Mr. Lennard was Miss Bertram's guardian, and she must submit to his authority.

"But he is such a wicked man, and she is such a darling," argued Mrs. Graham, with tears in her eyes. "And Miss Cowper, it seems, would receive her at landing; she showed me the letter. It was her father's wish, Ned."

But Mr. Graham was obdurate. He felt for Lily Bertram, and shared his aunt's sympathy; but if Mrs. Graham wanted his advice, he could only say, "Leave Miss Bertram where she is." Mrs. Graham heard him irresolute and perplexed. "The poor child had begged so hard," she reasoned, looking up in Edward Graham's face, "and it would be so easy. They could leave to-morrow early, and long before Mr. Lennard would know the truth, Miss Bertram would be out of his reach." And whilst she pleaded, and he resisted, the drama of little Lily Bertram's fate was progressing rapidly.

Mrs. Petherick's hope of learning a good deal by remaining at Mrs. Scot's was doomed to

disappointment. She was in the front box, indeed, but she could not be behind the scenes. She could not hear or see all that was said and done. Scarcely was Mrs. Graham closeted with her nephew, when Mr. Lennard came bouncing into the house, and giving Sarah Webster, who let him in, one of his sharpest and angriest looks, authoritatively bade her send down Miss Jones to him.

"Perhaps you will speak to missis first, sir," said Sarah coolly; "she is in the dining-room; or would you like going up to Mrs. Scot's boudoir and seeing her there alone?"

Her manner was almost aggressive, and though Mr. Lennard chafed under it, he would show no temper, but said that he would see Mrs. Scot alone.

Mrs. Scot's boudoir was a closet-like room, which might have dispensed with so euphemious an appellation. Mr. Lennard stared around him with contempt, kicked a footstool out of his way, flung himself down with all his might in a brittle chair, and sneered at a feeble view of Mrs. Scot's brother's house in Torquay, which happened to be hanging on the wall before him. But these signs of petty malice vanished when

Mrs. Scot entered the room, and greeted him with an air of weariness and fatigue, destined to impress on Mr. Lennard the fact that he was not a welcome visitor. Mr. Lennard, however, was all airy lightness and good-humour.

"Well, Mrs. Scot," said he, "you have my ward, it seems. I need not tell you"—he laid his finger to his nose—"that you cannot keep Miss Jones."

"I do not keep Miss Bertram," replied Mrs. Scot, without sitting down; "but she came here, and she shall stay here as long as she pleases. Of course, if you take her away by force, Mr. Lennard, I cannot prevent you."

Mr. Lennard felt the lady's supercilious, not to say impertinent, tone; but though a sour and ill-tempered man, he knew how to practise self-control, and he had resolved that Mrs. Scot should be made subservient to his ends.

"Come, Mrs. Scot," said he roundly, "we cannot carry on matters so, you and I—we can't, you know. I want the child, because I am responsible for her. The whole world is welcome to see what I do with her, and when Miss Scot comes and gives her her lessons——"

"Her lessons, Mr. Lennard!—I don't understand."

"Didn't I say it at once? Why, of course, Mrs. Scot, *I* can't do without Miss Scot to manage that girl."

Mr. Lennard knew what a loss that of Lily Bertram's teaching had been to the Scots; but Miss Scot's mother scorned the bait, and said, coldly, that Mr. Lennard was very kind, but that her daughter, she thought, had something else in view.

"There never was anything like women," emphatically said Lily's guardian. "Here am I, all for peace; and here you are, all for war! Now, just listen to reason. How can you and I not be friends, when a nephew of mine, who shall be nameless, is hankering after your daughter?"

"What nephew, Mr. Lennard?" austerely asked Mrs. Scot.

"I said he should be nameless," was the dry answer. "Of one thing you may be sure—he is desperately in love; and if—yes, if money it be that stops him, why, Mrs. Scot, *I* will mend that."

This was plain speaking, and Mrs. Scot, though she would have liked to know whether Mr. Lennard meant Dick Cowper or William

Lennard, was greatly mollified by the overture, and said, mildly enough—

"Well, Mr. Lennard, what do you want me to do?"

"Simply to have no underhand dealings with my ward."

"But, Mr. Lennard," said Mrs. Scot, sitting down, "I have no underhand dealings with poor little Miss Jones. The child came here, and could not be turned out in the street, surely. She is asleep now, but you can have her to-morrow."

"I will have Miss Jones to-night," said Mr. Lennard, setting his teeth.

"Well, then, Mr. Lennard," answered the lady, with unexpected temper, "you must go into my room and get her yourself."

Mr. Lennard looked as if, but for shame, he would take Mrs. Scot at her word. Lily was only a girl, but she had defied him, and he had resolved that he would break the spirit he could not bend.

"Have your way, Mrs. Scot," he said—"have your way. The ball is at your feet. Don't take it up—don't. Forget what I said about my nephew, and so forth. Have your way,

and keep Miss Jones till I send for her."

"I have no wish to assist rebellion and give a bad example to my own children," said Mrs. Scot, virtuously; "and since you are bent on having Miss Jones to-night, I will go and waken her myself, Mr. Lennard. I have no doubt she will be amenable to reason."

"I daresay she will," said Mr. Lennard, with a grim chuckle.

Some people seem born to be sovereigns, so incapable are they to dispense with a prime minister. Mrs. Scot could not do without Sarah Webster, and on leaving Mr. Lennard, summoned her faithful counsellor to a private conference, which was carried on in the kitchen, for want of a safer place. Sarah heard her mistress out in silence; then her black eyes sparkled as she said:

"And is Miss Lily to marry Mr. Cowper? And is he to have Mr. Lennard's money?"

"How can I tell?" pettishly expostulated Mrs. Scot. "I thought you would know. And there's that Mr. Graham come back, and Lily as civil to him as can be."

"Drat him!" said Sarah, with a darkening face. "He went away once, and I know how

my dear young lady fretted. What brings him back?—to send others away."

"He is leaving to-morrow; and then, nurse, I fancy Lily cares more for William Lennard than for anyone else."

"That boy!" exclaimed Sarah, with a scorn which would have done Edward Graham's heart good. "But perhaps it is he who is to get the money," she said, her dark face lighting.

Again Mrs. Scot pettishly asked how she should know.

"Well, it's one of the two," said Sarah, nodding. "Unless Mr. Lennard tells you which, don't you mind him, ma'am."

"Well, but, nurse, he also says that Lily is to go back and teach little Miss Jones, and I don't like to lose that," said Mrs. Scot, who could be perfectly candid when she was driven to the wall.

Sarah tightened her thin lips. She knew, no one better, how hard a trial the loss of Miss Bertram's teaching had been to the family. She had never forgiven Mr. Bertram for having presumed to dispense with Miss Scot's services, and she was quite willing to hold Miss Bertram responsible for her father's sin, and sacrifice her

without remorse. Moreover, she, too, knew that Mr. Lennard wanted more than to prevail over Miss Bertram. He wanted Saint Aubin back again, and if the man were managed well, he would give Miss Scot one of his nephews—no matter which—to gain his end. Yes, the man was in their power now; they had him, they could play on his passions and weaknesses as on a well-tuned instrument. Sarah almost laughed as she saw it all so clear before her.

"Well, ma'am," she said, "Mr. Lennard wants Miss Bertram, and Miss Bertram won't go to him; is that it?"

Mrs. Scot supposed so, but at the same time she looked so helpless that Sarah at once volunteered to manage Miss Bertram.

"Do, nurse," said Mrs. Scot, relieved, "my nerves can't stand it. And take her to Mr. Lennard in my boudoir, please, nurse."

On leaving Mrs. Graham, Lily had stolen back to Mrs. Scot's room, and sitting down on a chair nigh the bed, laid her head on the pillow. With the credulousness and inexperience of youth, she thought that Mrs. Scot would keep her for that night, at least; that Mrs. Graham would abet her escape, and that she

would be out of Mr. Lennard's power the next morning. It was hard to leave Saint Aubin and her father's grave and her own house, and to go to a strange, or at least an unknown country, and live there for three weary years, but anything was to be borne rather than to live with Mr. Lennard, be called Miss Jones, and be taunted all the day long.

"And yet how I shall long to come back," thought Lily, her tears flowing; "how my first act will be to place dear papa with his parents in the old Abbey, to get Mr. Graham to design his monument, and, who knows, to rebuild the turret. I know he would have wished it—dear, dear papa!"

Her tears fell faster and faster at the thought. Her grief was still in that phase in which the hopeful spirit of youth strives in vain against the sense of irremediable loss, and yet the thought of all she would accomplish in the future took something away from the bitterness of the present.

"Not asleep, Miss Lily," said Sarah, coming in and speaking briskly; "that's right. Mr. Lennard's waiting for you. I said you would soon be ready."

Lily lifted up her head from the pillow and gave her a scared look.

"I will not go with Mr. Lennard," said she brusquely; "and Mrs. Scot said I need not unless I liked."

"Mrs. Scot can't help herself, miss," sharply replied Sarah; "she can't keep you against Mr. Lennard's will."

"And has she sent you with that message?" asked Lily, indignantly.

"Why not?"

"Has she not dared to deliver it herself?" persisted Lily. "Oh! I would die before I would tell a servant to say that which I was ashamed to speak!"

No Bertram could have uttered this with a greater scorn of Mrs. Scot's cowardice.

"You had better come down, miss," said Sarah, grimly.

Lily would not deign to argue. She gathered her Autumn cloak around her long slender figure, and left the room without uttering a word. Sarah turned to the boudoir, but Mr. Lennard had already left it, and Miss Scot, whom her mother had sent up to him, was there alone. She gave a guilty start on seeing Lily Bertram, but tried to say quietly,

"Mr. Lennard is already below. Take heart, my dear. I shall go in very early to you to-morrow. Good night."

She wanted to kiss her, but Lily drew back from her and looked in her face.

"And have you too sold me?" she asked. "Oh! Lily, Lily!"

She could say no more; and more Miss Scot did not wait to hear.

"You are excitable to-night, Lily," she said; "you will be more reasonable to-morrow." And she went down as she spoke.

"Lily!" said Lily Bertram, pitifully, "Lily, come back and stand by me!"

But Miss Scot turned a deaf ear to the prayer. She went down swiftly, without looking back.

"The traitress!" said Lily Bertram, in a low tone; "but Mr. Lennard may bring her to me as much as he likes, never—never will I learn a word from her, the traitress!"

"You little brat!" exclaimed Sarah, with suppressed passion, all the vulgar violence of her nature roused at this defiance, "how dare you speak so of my young lady?"

"She is no lady," answered Lily, full of scorn—"no, she is no lady."

"If you don't hold your tongue, I'll give you such a shake as you will remember," said Sarah, speaking low, but coming nigh her and looking venomous. "You—you Jones you!" she hurled the name at her as if it had been a murderous weapon. She had forgotten the very cause she wished to serve in the fury which possessed her, and she looked so fierce and fell that Lily shrank from her with mingled disgust and fear.

"If you attempt to touch me, I shall jump out of that window," said she, with her hand on the hasp of the landing window by which she was standing.

Sarah calmed down, and burst into a loud hysterical laugh.

"Hoity-toity!" said she; "all I want is that you should come down to Mr. Lennard, who is waiting below; and the stairs will surely do as well as the window."

Lily did not answer. She was conquered, and she knew it. She passed by Sarah with a proud and steady step, submitting in silence. The victory was won, but at a dearer cost than Sarah knew. As Lily reached the foot of the stairs, the door of the little room where Mrs. Graham and her nephew had been talking to-

gether opened, and Edward Graham appeared on the threshold. The light from within fell on him. Lily went up to him and held out her hand.

"Good night, Mr. Graham," she said, with a wistful look. "Everyone is forsaking and betraying me—even Lily, whom I so loved. I am Miss Jones for them now; and Mrs. Scot sent up her servant to turn me out of her house, and Lily had not a kind word to say to me when I called her back. It was hard, Mr. Graham!"

"Come, Miss Jones, no tragedy nonsense," said Mr. Lennard, who was waiting for her by the gate under the archway.

"But you—you," said Lily, in a broken voice —"you who have so lost through my house—you have been always kind, Mr. Graham, and God bless you!"

She dropped his hand and turned away before he could answer.

"Take my arm," whispered a rough but not unkind voice behind her.

It was William Lennard who spoke. Lily shook her head, but when he took and slipped her arm within his, she did not withdraw it. The gate opened. Mr. Lennard went out first,

his nephew and Lily followed. The gate closed upon them again. Mr. Lennard had gone off with his prey.

"It is just heart-breaking, that's all," said Mrs. Graham, whose ready tears were flowing down her cheeks.

The parlour door opened, and Mrs. Scot's voice called out very crossly:

"Nurse, is that Miss Jones gone?"

Sarah, who had remained upstairs, did not answer; but Mr. Graham, coming forward, said, as he entered the parlour,

"Miss Bertram is gone, madam."

The gravity of his look and aspect conveyed a rebuke.

"Sir," said Mrs. Scot, starting up from the sofa in much wrath, and pouring on his devoted head all the irritation which had been gathering within her during this trying evening—"Sir, I beg to inform you that I know best by what name I am to designate that young lady."

"Besides," quietly said Lily Scot, who was secretly incensed at William Lennard's desertion. "Jones is her real name, poor child."

"Would you call her so if her father lived?" asked Edward Graham, point-blank.

"Mr. Graham," said Lily Scot, flushing red, "you forget yourself." And she rose, and with her hand leaning on the back of her chair, looked proudly in his face.

He looked back at her, whilst the room was suddenly still.

"I beg your pardon," he said, and bowed, and turned away, and felt, as he turned and walked into the street, "She is cold as ice, and she never liked me, never—never!"

CHAPTER XVII.

IT seemed now to Edward Graham that all was fairly over between him and Saint Aubin; that he had only to close the book of his life at that page, and read this sad chapter of disappointed love and ambition no more. But for his aunt he would have left this ill-fated Norman town that very night. As he walked down the street he brooded bitterly over his once-adored Lily's fickleness. She actually liked that sailor. Her unkindness to Miss Bertram Mr. Graham could have forgiven, but how could he forgive her this? With the intuition of jealousy he felt that Miss Scot had accepted him formerly as the most eligible suitor, that on the same principle she would have taken Dick Cowper if she could have got him, but that the real

preference of her heart was for William Lennard, the awkward, bearish, ill-mannered youth.

"And I thought she cared for me!" he laughed to himself with bitter scorn.

Mr. Graham was walking fast, for bitter thoughts urge a man on, when a hand was laid on his arm, and a sharp, irritable voice addressed him with—

"Mr. Graham, a word with you, if you please?"

The young man turned round and recognized Mr. Lennard. He had never liked the man, and now he almost loathed him. He would have liked to shake him off like a noxious insect, but the habitual courtesies of life checked the impulse, and he stood still and waited, with a cold, forbidding aspect, for which Mr. Lennard, to do him justice, cared naught.

"Mr. Graham, you mean to go to-morrow, I am told. Take my advice, stay here and try your chance. Don't stare, man. Monsieur Duhamel, the architect, died three days ago. You have but to step into his shoes; they will fit you—take my word for it."

Surprise at so unexpected a proposal kept Edward Graham mute. Mr. Lennard had al-

ways been odd, but this seemed more than mere eccentricity.

"Thank you, Mr. Lennard," he said, drily, "but Monsieur Duhamel's shoes may remain empty for me."

Mr. Lennard laughed a little short laugh.

"London's a fine place for those who have a name and can make money in it; but it is a very poor place for those who have to fight their way up the ladder. Here's a ready-made chance for you, Mr. Graham. If you kick it away, it may never come back. Monsieur Duhamel died rather suddenly; he left neither son nor nephew to fill his place. You have but to step in and take it."

Mr. Graham's dark eyes flashed fire.

"Mr. Lennard," said he, with ill-subdued anger; "have I asked you to meddle in my concerns, and tell me what chances I am to take?"

"You certainly have not," answered Mr. Lennard, chuckling.

"Then," said the young man, hotly, "take it for granted that I do not require your advice. I have the honour to wish you a good evening."

He was walking on, but Mr. Lennard's grasp,

which was always like that of a vice, arrested him. He could have freed himself, indeed, but the man, though hateful, was twenty years his elder, and there was no unmanly violence in Edward Graham's nature.

"Well, sir?" he said, sharply and imperatively.

"Well, sir, you are a very impatient young man," was the cool answer. "If you will engage to stay here in Saint Aubin, fill Monsieur Duhamel's vacant place, and settle down, in short, I will give you ten thousand francs out of Miss Jones's property as compensation for your former loss, and without your foregoing any further claim on that young lady when she comes of age."

This time Mr. Graham felt—not surprise—but amazement.

"Mr. Lennard," he said, point-blank, "you must have a motive in this. What is it?"

"Find it out," answered Mr. Lennard, with that ill-tempered rudeness which marred all his scheming. "Of course I have a motive," he added, in a more amiable tone. "You were wronged, Mr. Graham, in that matter of the turret. No more now than then would I allow that you had a claim on my ward's property for your full loss;

but ten thousand francs—four hundred pounds —Miss Jones can afford; and this, added to the late Monsieur Duhamel's empty shoes, may be the making of you yet."

Mr. Graham laughed bitterly.

"Mr. Lennard, do you know what my losses in that matter of the turret come to?" he asked.

"My good sir, where is the use of reckoning the cost of spilled milk?" was the calm reply. "Here is four hundred pounds, and Monsieur Duhamel's empty shoes, and you can take and leave them at your pleasure. You will make up your mind, I daresay."

And without waiting for an answer, Mr. Lennard walked away.

No man could receive two such proposals as those Mr. Lennard had just made to Edward Graham without attempting to fathom that gentleman's motives; and these were not very hard to discover after all. It was not from justice, though tardy, that Lily's guardian wanted to give the young man four hundred pounds of Lily's money. If he parted with a little, it was to secure the whole the more surely. If he brought back Edward Graham to

the place where his first love still dwelt, it was to keep his own nephew away from her. William Lennard was in love with Lily Scot, no doubt, but he was fond of Lily Bertram too. His temper was shy, jealous, and sulky; already Mr. Graham's mere presence in Mrs. Scot's house had exasperated him. If the young architect settled down in Saint Aubin, Mr. Lennard knew that William would never strive with him for Lily Scot's affections. He would fear defeat too much to enter on the contest. And then, of course, he would turn to Lily Bertram, and she did not dislike him; and how could she help herself?

As to Lily Scot, whether she married Edward Graham, or Dick Cowper, or no one at all—what did Mr. Lennard care? She was in his way, and she must get out of it, and all that was worth four hundred pounds.

The weak point in the armour of all schemers is that their imagination and their desires mislead them too constantly. They are short-sighted and self-absorbed, and take into no account the uncertain tempers and changing moods of the men and women on whom they mean to act. Lily Scot was offended with Mr.

Graham, and Mr. Graham was angry with Lily Scot. Neither now wished for the other, and when the young man guessed that the purpose Mr. Lennard had in drawing him to Saint Aubin was to use him as a scarecrow, his rage was great. No, not for ten thousand francs, nor yet ten times ten thousand, would he abet that arch traitor. Let his nephew marry that false Lily—what did he, Edward Graham, care? So spake Anger in her first fume, but second thoughts told another tale. Four hundred pounds! The sum was a large one to him, and the money was his, only a fragment of his great loss; and then his prospects in England were poor enough—his foot was still on the lowest rung of the ladder, and he saw few chances of getting up higher for many a year to come. What though Mr. Lennard's motives were interested and mean, the opening he had laid before the young man's view might be a good one. Once Edward Graham had thought that the turret of Mr. Bertram's house was his great chance; now, as he cooled down from his first anger, he asked himself if Monsieur Duhamel's empty shoes, as Mr. Lennard so significantly called that deceased gentleman's vacant

place, might not be the crowning chance of his life. He tried to solve the problem of his fate. Four hundred pounds, a chance of making his way in life, the certainty of punishing Lily Scot by convincing her of his indifference, were all Mr. Graham saw in Mr. Lennard's proposal; but that all was much, and only one question remained. How far had that schemer spoken the truth, and how was he, Edward Graham, to know it?

"He will tell me," thought Edward Graham, as, entering the Cité de Jérusalem, he suddenly caught sight in the sitting-room on the ground-floor of Monsieur Merle's fresh face. That honest face lit up with gladness as its owner saw the young man. The builder rose, and came forward with an outstretched hand, whose grasp was cordially returned. Race, speech, education, birth, and those acquired feelings which become so subtle a part of our being, all divided the middle-aged builder from the young architect, but each recognised in the other what each valued himself most for being—in truth, in courage, and in honour, in the very highest meaning of the word, a man.

"It does me good to see you, Monsieur Gra-

ham," said Monsieur Merle, who did indeed look delighted. "I warned my wife that I would spend the night here rather than miss you. 'Do,' said she—'spend two, three nights, if you please, but see Monsieur Graham whatever you do.' And here I am," added Monsieur Merle, with a happy laugh, as their first greeting over, he followed Mr. Graham up to his room.

The pleasure of meeting again was more than what they had to say to each other. Monsieur Merle, indeed, who was communicative, related the history of the last baby at full length; but when he had done this, and informed Mr. Graham that Laurent—that good-for-nothing fellow—had come to a bad end, and been sent to Cayenne, and alluded to Mr. Bertram's death, his topics of discourse were exhausted. Edward Graham, who was always reticent, made few comments on Monsieur Merle's communications, and abstained from entering on the trying subject of his prospects in England; but at the same time he related to him, without a moment's hesitation, the singular conversation which had just taken place between himself and Mr. Lennard. "And now, Monsieur Merle," added he,

by way of conclusion, "what do you consider the value of Mr. Lennard's proposal to be?"

Perplexity and surprise appeared on the builder's honest face.

"Monsieur Graham," said he, "I do not understand it. I know that Monsieur Duhamel's sister was Monsieur Lennard's second wife, and I suppose he has something to do with his affairs. I know too that Monsieur Duhamel, being alone here—Monsieur Gentil failed, you know—made money, though he was not a clever man, not fit to tie your shoe-strings, Monsieur Graham; but I never had any dealings with Monsieur Lennard; and you know more about him than I do," he added, with a wistful look full in Edward Graham's face.

The young man smiled.

"Yes, Monsieur Merle," said he, "I know too much about him, and I will have nothing to do with it."

"Monsieur Duhamel's business was a good one—a very good one," meditatively said Monsieur Merle.

"But his shoes are not for my wear," said Edward Graham, carelessly, "thank you, Monsieur Merle."

"Well, I must go," said the builder, rising. "I am glad to have seen you again, Monsieur Graham; and if you should change your mind about that business, remember that I should be glad to pay back a good turn, and that, should you need help or advice, Jean Merle would be there."

He spoke very earnestly. Very cordially did Edward Graham thank him, and thus they parted.

"The man means it, for he is true; and I daresay it would be a good thing enough; but have aught to do with that traitor—never—never!"

The very next morning brought however so complete a revulsion of feeling, that Edward Graham's stern "Never" was cancelled with a sigh.

Captain Jekyll spent an hour every morning in the reading-rooms of Saint Aubin, and thither Mr. Graham repaired, after having received two letters—one a brief note from his aunt, begging of him to wait another day for her, as she had a bad cold and could not travel; and the other from Mr. Blake, informing him that he was going to the Continent, and must post-

pone till his return those alterations in Blake House which he (Mr. Blake) and Mr. Graham had begun a few weeks ago. But Mr. Blake did not expect to be more than some months away, and would have much pleasure to resume the matter on his return in the Spring.

"I know what that means," thought poor Edward Graham, as he folded up the letter with a weary sigh. "Johnson, or Thomson, or Robertson has got the job, and I am thrown over. Oh! to have a fair chance here, anywhere, and to be once more wanted rather than wanting!"

In this mood, a favourable one to Mr. Lennard's proposal, Edward Graham sought Captain Jekyll, or, to speak more correctly, more information.

Captain Jekyll's delight at being sought out was excessive, and his zeal at giving knowledge as boundless as that knowledge itself seemed to be unlimited. He roared at Mr. Graham, he rolled his goggle eyes at him, he held him fast whilst he told him of Monsieur Duhamel's illness, decease, and burial. The Captain knew to a T what Monsieur Duhamel had left, and what his heiresses, all female

relatives on his late sister's side, meant to do with the money. That Monsieur Duhamel had died worth a handsome sum, and that he had left neither relation, nor friend, nor pupil to take up his professional inheritance, seemed positive, from the Captain's account.

"And you ought to come back to Saint Aubin and fill the poor devil's place," roared the Captain along the quay, to which Edward Graham had thought it prudent to lure him for this conversation. "By Jove! you ought, sir," said the Captain, shaking his stick at the shipping. "Mind my words, sir, you'll do it; you will, and marry Lily Scot, as true as my name is Jekyll. Ha! ha!"

"Is not Miss Scot going to marry Mr. Lennard's nephew?" asked Mr. Graham, with much seeming unconcern.

"That fine girl marry that boy!" said the Captain, with a look of contempt. "Sir, I will marry her myself rather than allow it. No, no; the young fellow is sweet upon her, and she likes it—they all do, but Lily will never marry that young awkward tar, sir—never! mark my words, sir. Never!"

A good deal more Captain Jekyll said. The

man's word was worth very little; he was a braggart, and by no means trustworthy, and yet he helped to turn the balance in favour of Mr. Lennard's proposal and when Edward Graham left him and went back to the Cité de Jérusalem, he asked himself by what foolish scruple he had ever hesitated about the matter. The four hundred pounds were his. He did not wrong Mr. Bertram's orphan child by taking back that sum from her guardian. Let Mr. Lennard's motives be mean and unworthy, could he not defeat them? Was he not resolved, determined, as determined as man could be, to give up all thought of Lily Scot? Mr. Lennard's nephew might marry her if he pleased, or Captain Jekyll, or anyone who liked. But resolved though the young man might be, he gave a little start when he found Mr. Lennard waiting for him, and sitting in his Louis Quinze chair with his stick between his knees, and his chin resting on the carved grinning head that adorned it.

"Your servant, Mr. Graham," said he, without rising, "come to know your decision."

All Edward Graham's dislike for that man, all his remembrance of the bitter wrong he had

endured at his hands, rose within him at the sight of his face, at the sound of his voice. He could not prevent his look from growing forbidding and stern, his manner from becoming sharp, mistrustful, and aggressive.

"Mr. Lennard," he said, "I remember the past too well not to feel that you have some motive of your own for offering me money, and, if all turns out well, a position. What that motive is I may guess, but do not choose to say."

Mr. Lennard nodded, shut his eyes, and drew down the corners of his mouth as much as to say, "Then don't, my dear fellow, don't say anything at all about it."

"But I warn you," resumed the young man exasperated at his insolent manner, "that so far as I am concerned, your motive will be defeated. I will take the four hundred pounds because the money is mine. I will take the late Monsieur Duhamel's position because I choose to do so, but I will give you thanks for neither; but in no manner will I abet your schemes against the late Mr. Bertram's child. I will be neither your ally nor your accomplice."

Mr. Lennard nodded again, and opening his eyes said coolly,

"You will take the four hundred pounds, set up in Saint Aubin, and engage to stay here two years."

"Why two years?" asked Edward Graham, sharply.

"Because I do not choose that you should go off at the end of six months. Silence means consent—eh? Well, we can go round to Monsieur Duhamel's house and give it a look. I am authorized by my late wife's nieces to let it be furnished at a fair price, which you, I suppose, will be willing to give. The house is large for a bachelor, but that lies with you, Mr. Graham."

He looked at Edward Graham, who uttered no denial. And so it was decided, and like one in a dream the young man followed his visitor downstairs.

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